Liber Lapidis

The Book of the Stone

I

Zosimus' writings on alchemy were collected in a huge, twenty-eight volume encyclopedia, *Alchemical Matters*, most of which, sadly, is lost to us. One important saying that has survived concerns the alchemist's perpetual goal: the philosophers' stone. Zosimus called it 'a stone which is no stone, this precious thing which has no value, this polymorphous thing which has no form, this unknown thing which is known to all,' thus contributing to the very obscurity he complained about to, while adding a Christian element to the alchemical brew. Psalm 118:22 says: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone.' Exactly when talk of the philosophers' stone first began is, as with so much else in this context, unclear. Some suggest Bolos speaks of it, but this reference comes from an account by Synesius, an alchemist who followed Bolos, and who claims that Bolos was taught by Ostanes, a mythical figure who was said to be Alexander the Great's personal alchemist. Zosimus seems to have known of it.

II

Yet Jabir's own contribution to this quest is, if anything, more obscure than Zosimus', and his books are written in so oblique and mysterious a style that it is understandable many readers considered them gibberish — the word, as mentioned, derived from his name for precisely this reason. Of the qualities of the philosophers' stone, Jabir speaks of 'oleaginy (oiliness), affinity, tenuity of matter (that it can be liquefied), clearness of purity, radical humidity, fixing earth, and tincture.' The stone can bring alchemical mercury and sulphur to perfection, and it is formed from different substances using different techniques. But what it is exactly and how to find or make it, remains unclear. In his *Book of Stones* (*Kitab Al-Ahjar*) Jabir explains why he is less than forthright about this problem. 'The purpose,' he says, 'is to baffle and lead into error everyone except those whom God loves and provides for.' The small number of those who have discovered the philosophers' stone suggests that God loves and provides for some precious few. Many have sought the stone without success, just as many have read Jabir's labyrinthine writings, and come away from them knowing no more than they did beforehand, possibly even less.

III

One consequence of the *Emerald Tablet* and the search for the philosophers' stone is that it led to an Hermeticism very different from the kind associated with Renaissance humanism or with the Hermeticists of Alexandria. As Florian Ebeling has argued, the alchemical tradition makes little use of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, although it does see Hermes Trismegistus as one of its founders. Likewise, the Platonic Hermeticism associated with Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, which we will discuss in the next chapter, doesn't refer to either the *Emerald Tablet* or the philosophers' stone. Nor, as already mentioned, did the Hermeticism responsible for the *Corpus Hermeticum*. And if, in the Italian Renaissance tradition, Plato seemed to be the culmination of a long lineage of sages reaching back to the thrice-great one—the Hermetic or Golden Chain—for this 'alchemical Hermeticism,' the major modern (that is, Renaissance) figure was Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493—1541), otherwise known as Paracelsus. Paracelsus was an alchemist, natural philosopher, and healer, and he can be seen as the founder of 'alternative medicine,' at least in the west. His prestige was so great that Paracelsus was considered a veritable 'Hermes of the North,' the north being, for Italian humanists, the land beyond the Alps, specifically Germany, although Paracelsus himself was Swiss.

IV

Along with revelation and secrecy, 'initiation' is the third concept unceasingly connected with the Hermetic traditions. Initiation is much more than a communication of knowledge. It involves not only knowing the hieroglyphic code, the enigmatic protective shell of Hermetic wisdom, but also demonstrating that one is worthy of this knowledge. The reason for the arcanizing of Hermetic knowledge was concern that it might fall into unworthy hands. Initiation was thus, above all, a test of worthiness that preceded the conveying of knowledge and constituted its necessary presupposition. Knowledge was to be communicated only to the worthy. Worthiness was not a question of knowledge but of virtue. This caution was connected with the special power ascribed to natural symbols. On the basis of thinking in terms of references and analogies, rather than causal relationships, Hermeticism developed a theory of the coherence of the world that could be put to practical use, magically, mystically, and medically, but, above all, alchemically, for refining metals, prolonging life, achieving earthly bliss—in short, for producing the Philosophers' Stone. The framework of immediate signification was a far better guide to the secrets of Nature than that of conventional science.

V

Hermeticism, a primeval knowledge that bore all that followed in embryonic form, a divine revelation imparted even to pagans and one that was nearly identical to Christianity, an all-embracing doctrine of reconciliation — many have understood Hermeticism in this sense, whereas others have used it as a battle cry in their struggle against Aristotelianism and other 'devilish nonsense.' It has been possible to appeal to Hermeticism, as Bruno did to argue for the Copernican revolution with a metaphysical pantheism; or to entrench oneself as a scientific reactionary behind a concept of revelation; or to combat deistic and progressive movements. At times Hermeticism has been a theological and philosophical preoccupation with the concept of spirit, but it has also been a concern to produce the Philosophers' Stone. Hermetic writings were used to promote the Enlightenment but also to polemicize against it.

VI

Hermes Trismegistus and the natural philosophical ideas ascribed to him also belong to the milieu in which alchemy arose in late antiquity. Alchemy, in all likelihood, first flourished in Hellenistic Egypt in the first century. It combined a number of heterogeneous ideas such as Aristotelian and Stoic doctrines regarding the elements and matter and pantheistic and Gnostic ideas, with originally Babylonian astrology and motifs from Egyptian mythology, particularly the myth of Osiris. The oldest collections of chemical formulas are preserved in a papyrus in Leiden and Stockholm; it contains, among other things, instructions on how to replicate silver, and it uses code names to designate the materials required. It is from the third or fourth century and was presumably found in a tomb at Thebes. A basic alchemical text preserved only in fragments, the *Physika kai Mystika* of pseudo-Democritus, who professes to be a disciple of the Persian sage Ostanes, offers instructions on the imitation or preparation of precious metals from base ones. Gold or the Philosophers' Stone is to be prepared from lead: success will be achieved through a process by which the metal turns successively black, white, yellow, and red.

The first author of alchemical texts whom we can identify is Zosimus of Panopolis. He portrays both the technical and spiritual sides of alchemy, with special emphasis on the latter. And for this spiritual alchemy he cites Hermes Trismegistus as witness:

> In his *Book on Immateriality*, Hermes rejects magic [in opposition to Zoroaster] and says: "Pneumatic man, who has known himself, must neither achieve anything whatsoever with the help of magic, even if it is generally useful, nor must he defy necessity, but allow it to act according to its nature and its will. And he must not allow himself to be distracted along the way from his search for himself, to know God, and to understand the ineffable Trinity; and he must leave the filth subjected to him, that is, the body, to Destiny, to do with it what it will."

VII

Balduff's image of Hermes possesses much in common with that of Italian Renaissance philosophy in that Hermes is seen as an ancient, wise Egyptian who anticipated the Christian dogma of the Trinity and thus was admired by Lactantius. Augustine is mentioned not to brand Hermes as a pagan but to stress his astonishing knowledge regarding the divine. But the thesis that Hermes wrote prior to Moses, and thus was more ancient than the biblical-Mosaic tradition, is seldom found in Renaissance philosophy. Clear, however, are the differences from Ficino's image of Hermes. Here, Hermes is claimed as the prime exponent of alchemy. Balduff was indifferent to the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*, but he saw the importance of Hermes' alchemical writings such as the *Tabula Smaragdina* and the *Tractatus Septem de Lapide Philosophico* (seven tractates on the Philosophers' Stone). Balduff places Hermes Trismegistus at the beginning of a tradition to which Plato, Plotinus, and Ficino did not belong, a tradition that included Zosimus, the first alchemist, and the Persian magus and alchemist Ostanes, and was completed by Theophrastus von Hohenheim, also known as Paracelsus.

VIII

Like Balduff, Tancke makes no appeal to the *Corpus Hermeticum*. He highlights the *Tabula Smaragdina* and the alchemical texts regarding the Philosophers' Stone as the most important evidence of Hermes Trismegistus. In the sense of a mythoalchemy that viewed the classical myths as symbolic encodings of the alchemical process and its history, he interpreted the narrative of the "golden fleece" as a report on the spread of alchemical knowledge through various cultures. Though Tancke wished to discern the history of alchemy in Greek mythology, he did not think that Hermetic knowledge passed directly and unadulterated from the Egyptians to the Greeks. Greek wisdom, natural philosophy in particular, was basically of Egyptian origin:

> Because the philosophers in Greece understood that the Egyptian priests were excellent natural historians and learned

> persons who alone understood the mystery of nature, [...] they went to Egypt, and from the priests and philosophers, called magi among the Persians, they learned the true philosophy that was not found among any Greeks. Thus Democritus of Abdera, a man of high intellect, was prompted to go to Egypt to learn the mystery of nature and the true philosophy. When he therefore opened the tomb of the Egyptian priest Dardanus and returned to Greece with the books wherein the golden philosophy and hidden mystery of nature were described, he studied them and finally himself wrote and left behind books on alchemy.

IX

In the eyes of the Hermetists of the early modern period, great dangers were entailed in the possibility of having the forces of nature at one's disposal, in making use of the invisible powers and forces that rule the world. And when it came to the power of the Philosophers' Stone, the dangers of taking control of the world seemed especially clear. The Stone had far-reaching effects in conferring health and prosperity: it could act against all manifestations of mortality; it could aid in the preparation of gold and precious stones; and, as a medium of universal salvation, it could bestow "all temporal bliss, corporal health, and earthly luck." It seemed to open a path to redemption that was no longer tied to the crucifixion of Christ and to divine autonomy in the act of salvation. The unbelieving, selfish person was to be kept, at all costs, far away from this powerful resource. Since it was immanent in the world, the medium of redemption, the Stone, had to be hidden:

> And when the philosophers found it by dint of great labor and industriousness, they obscured it with strange speech and mystery, lest it be revealed to the unworthy and the precious pearls be cast to swine, for if just anyone knew it, all industriousness and labor would cease, and man would devote himself to nothing but this one thing, and people would not live rightly, and the world would perish, for out of their miserliness and because of abundance, they would anger God.

Maintaining the secret of the stone was necessary to prevent the egoistic man from obtaining a this-worldly salvation that would leave him unfettered by labor and need and thus unable to lead a life that was pleasing to God.

The authors of many Hermetic texts believed that a kind of initiation was needed so that the mystery regarding the Philosophers' Stone could only be

communicated to the faithful and the understanding and would remain hidden from fools and unbelievers. A propaedeutic phase would prepare man and make him receptive to a second phase, when a revelation would be imparted. Those who wished to understand the Hermetic doctrines, so it was often stated, had to avoid all independent efforts to acquire the necessary understanding through their own intellect. Instead, they had to remain largely passive, "for it [is] impossible to discover this secret by means of one's own nitpicking; rather we must go to school with the wise and learn from them, so that this mystery will be known." Only by purification can the intellect be prepared for revelation, and the mind must allow itself to be led. "For our intellect, which is in itself dark, must be lit by the sun of the living knowledge that God alone grants in the art of the secret wisdom." If the adept in alchemy takes this path of enlightenment to arrive at knowledge of the Philosophers' Stone, which brings health and happiness, then God will maintain his redemptive autonomy. Because the Stone could not simply be found but had to be imparted to man through divine inspiration, the decision over salvation or damnation remained God's.

Colberg stressed that Paracelsists, Rosicrucians, Quakers, and Böhmists all appealed to Hermes Trismegistus as their spiritual father: "Today's fanatics boast that they derive their science from Hermes." These fanatics erroneously believed that Hermes was the vehicle of a primeval, Adamic wisdom. Colberg did not doubt that Hermes Trismegistus had been a real person, but he considered it an established fact that the man's supposed writings were pseudepigrapha. All the Paracelsists' legends about Hermes were a "baseless poem" with no historical evidence. In opposing the assertion that Hermetic doctrine originated in antediluvian or Mosaic antiquity, Colberg assumed that the texts dealing with the Philosophers' Stone were composed around the year 300 c.e. In his critique of the Paracelsists' image of Hermes, Colberg, along with Pierre Gassendi, relied primarily on Hermann Conring and Isaac Casaubon. The Paracelsic texts contained no ancient Egyptian teaching but rather Platonic and Christian doctrines "put together by heretics of the ancient Church." Colberg used the term "Platonic-Hermetic Christianity" to designate an illegitimate concoction of Christian content and pagan ideas. His thesis was as simple as it was trenchant: the fanatics belonged to a mystical tradition with the stamp of the medieval mystic Johannes Tauler and the "*theologia teutsch*" (German theology), but its most ancient roots lay in Platonism.

> If we read Hermes, Plato, the cabalists, the allegorists, Philo Judaeus, Origen, or Tauler, it becomes palpable: the modern masters have borrowed their doctrines and opinions from the same writers.

After Colberg's historical and genetic destruction of the Hermetic legitimation legends, which he modeled after Conring, Colberg could now attack all who invoked a Platonic-Hermetic heritage: he stigmatized Ficino as a conjurer, and, in particular, attacked Paracelsus as immersed in a tradition packed with

> cabala, magia, chymia, and the ancient pagan authors who wrote about the Philosophers' Stone. In particular, he based himself on the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, Pythagoras, Plato, and their followers, wherein concourse with evil spirits did not little encourage him.

XI

As the first king in Egypt, Ham, son of Noah, wrote a description of alchemy, kept it safe in the Chest of the Flood, and afterward brought it back to Egypt; and, after him, his son Migraim and his adviser Hermes at that time taught the same. For those who understand the art of gold reckon its antiquity to be great; indeed, they claim that Adam, the first man, was the originator of the Philosophers' Stone, and they indicate that God made its model by means of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and also that the preparation of gold was pursued by King Ninus and his consort Semiramis; and that, among the Egyptians, it was written down by Hermes in hieroglyphic, that is, sacred, picture writing.

XII

The typical Egyptian character of this tradition has become even clearer after the discovery of the Hermetic treatise at Nag Hammadi, *The Treatise of the Eighth and Ninth Heavenly Sphere*, where Hermes Trismegistus speaks to his initiated disciple:

> O' my Son, it is proper to inscribe this book on turquoise stellas in hieroglyphs, because the consciousness shall be the foreman of it. This is why I command this doctrine to be engraved unto stone and you will place it in my holy temple, where eight guards will protect it with the ninth being the Sun. The male guardians, on the right side, have a frog-like face and on the left, the female ones have a cat's face. Also place a square milk-stone at the foot of the turquoise tablets and write the name on the sapphire tablet in hieroglyphic signs. O' my Son, you will place these, when I am in Virgo and the Sun is placed in the first part of the day; for fifteen degrees will have then passed me by.

XIII

Next to immortality of the spiritual body, there was mentioned a second, lower aspect of the Philosophers' Stone—physical immortality, the "universal panacea" (complete medicine) or the "elixir of life" (*aurum potabile*, drinkable gold). The third, even lower, aspect of alchemy is "transmutation"—the transformation of metals. This outer, expressive form of alchemy became the most well known, as I pointed out above. But here lies a hidden spiritual-alchemical meaning as well. For, just as the hermetic axiom says "As above, so below," the investigation of "below" may lead to insight into "above." Handling metals, as well as working with minerals and plants, meant dealing with divine powers.

XIV

For Zosimus, the quest for the *lapis philosophorum*, the Philosophers' Stone, was central. To find it, he knew that the heart first had to come to rest. He points out in his treatise *Regarding apparatus and ovens*, that sages like Hermes were superior because they avoided distress and joy. He warns his "mystical" sister, Theosobia, of the low conniving of bad demons who "hunger for the human soul." He gives her advice "as a woman" to learn to control herself and to subdue her passions:

> By doing this you will acquire the true and natural (tinctures) which are applicable at certain times. Do these things until your soul is perfected. When you have realized your perfection and have obtained the natural (tinctures), spit on the matter while hastening yourself towards Poimandres and receive the baptism in the mixing bowl and hasten yourself towards your own kind.

These are very obvious references to the first and fourth treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Zosimus had read Hermes very thoroughly. Furthermore, he considered him, as did so many after him, to be the founder of the sacred science of (al)chemistry. As a seeker for the Philosophers' Stone, Zosimus found the answer in Hermes. He discovered that it was an inner search. According to Zosimus, the Philosophers' Stone is a many-formed something that truly has no form, something precious without "a stone, not being a stone, an unknown something, known to everyone."

XV

Next to his physician's practice in London, Robert Fludd ran an alchemical laboratory where he also prepared medicines for his patients. Still, Fludd was more of a "spiritual" than a practical alchemist. The Philosophers' Stone was, in his eyes, nothing less than the "cornerstone," Christ, and "Christ, the noble cornerstone,

is in us." Beyond his work in alchemy, Fludd published many books about Kabala, the natural sciences, astrology, philosophy, and music. According to Yates, he became "saturated with the *Corpus Hermeticum*... and with the *Asclepius*, and it is hardly exaggerated to find on almost each and every page citations from the texts of Hermes Trismegistus." For Fludd, Trismegistus was "the most divine of all philosophers."

XVI

Indeed, the manifesto is rightly called *Chymische Hockzeit*. It is filled to the brim with alchemical symbology—indeed, the leading lady of the marriage guests is named Alchemeia. And on the fifth day, the guests sail across a lake to the "tower of Olympus," where a large laboratory is situated. On the sixth day, the alchemical labor is completed, each day on a floor higher up. The tower actually symbolizes a retort: the higher you go in the "bottle," the more transparent the process becomes, and the finer the matter. Finally, the royal couple is regenerated out of the decapitated bodies of the old kings. In their splendid nudity, bride and groom lay together, the alchemical symbol of the *coniunctio*, the unification. What began in the spirit receives form in the flesh. On the seventh day, the marriage takes place. The guests are placed as "knights of the golden stone." They have guided the alchemical process up to the Philosophers' Stone. In the chapel where Christian Rozencreutz is knighted, he leaves the following words behind: "*Summa scientica nihil scire*"—"the highest knowledge is knowing nothing."

XVII

Mercurius is the pivotal point in the alchemical process of liberation. The goal of this process, as we saw before, is the discovery of the *lapis philosophorum*, the Philosophers' Stone—seen from a psychological perspective, the deepest Self. So Jung translates the alchemical symbology into a psychological one. For him, the *materia* in alchemy stands for the (unconscious) self, which needs to be examined carefully. According to Jung, in the alchemical thus in the self—lies the *anima mundi* ("soul of the world"). And this world soul is personified by the spirit Mercurius.

XVIII

Both material and spiritual alchemists proceeded towards their goal with a linear understanding of the process: through a series of causes and effects the object would be transmuted into the final form sought, the Philosophers' Stone, which in the material world would be the purest of metals—gold, and in the spiritual world, the perfected pneuma/psyche of the individual alchemist. As this process could not be undertaken without some assistance, in material alchemy that assistance came in the form of Mercurius, the reconciler of opposites, and in the spiritual the Holy Spirit, whose similarities with Mercury had long been noted.

XIX

Rosemary (Ros marinus) contributes the quality of "sea-dew ... the *aqua vita* ... divine water" divine grace, "the great sea over which the alchemist sailed guided by the 'heart' of Mercurius." This water is also said to be a bath of generation, a spring rain which brings forth vegetation. Dorn's recipe also includes the red lily, the male part of an alchemical pair, the female aspect of which is represented by the white lily. Together, they express the energy of the *hierosgamos*, the divine sexual connection; eternal nature, "the quintessence itself" said to be "the noblest thing that human meditation can reach." The lily is considered a true gamonymus (hierogamus of light and darkness), an energy of bringing together what is disparate. Finally, and possibly, according to Jung, the most important ingredient is human blood, the red tincture, "seat of the soul" and considered "a preliminary stage of the lapis." Blood has long been seen as "a magic charm … binding the soul to God or the devil." The addition of human blood, according to von Franz, means "a complete devotion to the work." For her, the result of Dorn's recipe leads to the secret of the Philosophers' Stone. The stone:

> is identical with the God-image in the human soul. The whole procedure is like an active imagination performed with symbolically meaningful substances .... The end result is also described as a four-petaled yellow flower, exactly as in the Chinese text of *The Secret of The Golden Flower*. The whole recipe runs: Take the inner truth, add your *elan vital* to it, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the capacity to link opposites. Put into this mixture heavenly and earthly love (sex) and then you have an essence with which you can unite heaven and earth. All ingredients assemble round the four-petaled yellow flower, i.e., the Self.

In the above ingredients, one finds material support for the second conjunction linking the *unio mentalis* to the body. In addition, Jung's amplifications also address the shadow and the archetypal bipolarity of these ingredients that can interfere with, poison, negate, and blacken the *coniunctio*. The process and production of the second *coniunctio* requires careful consideration of the *pharmakon*—both the healing and poisonous dimension of the recipe, whether literal or symbolic.

XX

Following the actual notebooks of the alchemist George Starkey (aka Philalethes), Principe unmasks the seemingly symbolic processes by creating a chemical version of "'animated' Philosophical Mercury" and its production of a "philosophical egg" out of which, over time and with proper heating, there emerged a glittering and fully-formed tree in a laboratory flask. For Principe, this was "the 'Tree

of Hermes,'" the philosophical tree, which for the alchemist would have been "vivid and unquestionable proof that he had found the'entrance to the palace of the king,' that is, the crucial threshold leading to the Philosophers' Stone." Principe reflects that "[f]or the historian, the reality of this Philosophical Tree indicates unambiguously that at least some of the imagery of chrysopoeia [gold-making, seeking the Philosophers' Stone], bizarre as it might seem, stems from the literal Philosophers' appearance of reacting chemicals" and must be taken literally. For Principe, the results of such experiments must have served to encourage the alchemists in pursuit of their goals. Yet, while this discovery is indeed very provocative, it is also interesting that "Starkey's continued experimentations apparently did not lead to the Philosophers' Stone; otherwise, it is doubtful he would have ended up in debtor's prison. The failure finally to obtain the Stone, despite encouraging results such as gold's volatilization or its germination into a glittering tree," raises for me the question: Why were there so many alchemical failures to produce the Philosophers' Stone? From my perspective, the reason for this is that limiting the philosophical tree to a naturalistic perspective reduces it to a literal, chemical phenomenon.

In the hands of Deleuze and Guattari Kleist's use of affect can be taken as a 'war-machine' that destabilizes the'image of thought'; an image that Kant, as a 'state thinker' stabilizes (Goethe and Hegel being other 'state thinkers' that Deleuze and Guattari name). As we continue, let us also consider *Ulysses* as an example of an aesthetic 'war-machine' whose *ethical* (as opposed to moral) function also consists in de-territorializing this 'image.' The form of *Ulysses* as a book is not state-like, something Jung finds troubling when he announces that 'in those seven hundred and thirty-five pages no obvious repetitions, not a single blessed island where the long-suffering reader may come to rest; no place where he can seat himself'. The idea of *Ulysses* as a 'whole' consisting of coded internal relations is replaced by a nomadic or rhizomatic open-whole. Marlan refers to the work as an 'alchemical book,' which by 'being flexible, like wax or soft gold, *Ulysses* as an image of the Philosophers' Stone defeats logocentrism.' Likewise, Deleuze and Guattari argue:

> The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The State's pretension to be a world order, and to root man.

> The war machine's relation to an outside is not another "model"; it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome (Kleist and Kafka against Goethe).

XXII

Psychotherapy today, like alchemy in the early seventeenth century, has the advantage of being still on the cusp of becoming a science. It can be practised and conceptualized in many ways, each rich in its potential to enhance transformation. By comparing itself to alchemy, Jungian analysis has distinguished itself from other schools mainly in recognizing the symbolic thrust of its enterprise, and in producing practitioners willing to be candid about what they have experienced rather than rushing to codify their craft into a science. I admire the courage of the contributors to this book in sharing just how they mix the materials brought to them by present-day clients who are en route to discovering how their complexes may be unsnarled sufficiently to enable the flexible tension that propels transformation. Though the goal of the individuated patient may turn out to be as elusive as the liberation of the human spirit via the Philosophers' Stone, the discoveries patients in analytical psychotherapy have made about their own alchemical energies retain the potential to generate new transformative practices in all of us. The reader of this book, whether psychotherapist, patient, or amateur *aficionado* of the soul, will benefit from what it tells us is being done on this Jungian ground. I hope, particularly, that sophisticated readers already accustomed to perusing the psychotherapy literature can rise above the complacency that attends being introduced to new developments within an established discipline and pursue what is to be freshly discovered here with a sensibility naive enough to consider, as if for the first time, what real change within the self may require.

XXIII

When we talk about 'gold' or 'the philosophers' stone' we are using a language we *know* is not real — not attempting a description of things 'as they really are'. It is a myth, useful in understanding the myths we make about ourselves. The American sage Mark Twain is supposed to have said 'faith is believing in what you know ain't so.' We *know* we are doing that, talking in symbols, in a language of interpretation.

XXIV

Michael Whan looks at how alchemical images, for many Jungians, can be a defining gesture, yet sometimes a defensive discourse. Merely *applying* alchemical language to the individual, private condition of a person's psyche can reduce Jung's alchemical psychology to a 'grand narrative'. Drawing on Wilhelm Giegerich, he suggests that alchemy is a psychological language, not a rhetorical ornament. The 'philosophers' stone,' the transformational key as well as goal of the alchemical quest, is a paradox: 'the stone that is no stone'; we do not have to turn a metaphor into a thing.

XXV

Four themes illustrating the quest for the Philosophers' Stone spontaneously emerged in our collaboration. First, the concept of the *unus mundus* — 'one world' — seems primary. This imaginal space is where archetypes and synchronicity relate. Second, meaningful coincidence, or synchronicity, occurs when both the observer and the phenomena observed come from the same place in the unconscious. The *unus mundus* is the alchemical vessel holding the opposites, which come together in the *coniunctio* or mystic marriage. Third, opposites are transformed, gradually changing one into the other. This may require innocence and cunning, as shown in the story 'the Spirit in the bottle' in which a boy tricks the trapped spirit Mercurius into giving him valuable gifts. And fourth, the myth of Pandora — whose box released suffering, yet had hope hidden at the bottom. Hope is essential for any creative operation that 'makes gold'. We feel alchemy is a language of hope, and hope you enjoy the alchemical quest.

XXVI

This is what alchemists called putrefactio: exactly as in this dream, vile and disgusting, repulsive and putrefying with so utterly foul a stench no one can bear to be anywhere near it. It is the most sickening of places yet also the place where there is found the gold, the universal panacea, the elixir of life, the philosophers' stone.

The alchemists carried out a series of procedures by which they believed they could extract gold from base metal. However, one very important fact needs to be remembered: it was much more than a series of tasks to be performed in their laboratories. Alchemists lived their work in body and soul, totally committed and dedicated to their task and identified in body and mind with what took place in the flask. Some became seriously ill, some died. Like all mystical processes and the unconscious itself, alchemical work can be very dangerous if approached without proper knowledge and preparation.

XXVII

> The self is the ordering and unifying centre of the total psyche... the ego is the seat of subjective identity while the self is the seat of objective identity. The self is thus the supreme psychic authority and subordinates the ego to it... It is identical with the *imago Dei* [the image of God]... It is expressed by certain typical symbolic images called Mandalas.

The Mandala is an important symbol of the self; a wonderful expression of the self as the highest value, the philosophers' stone of the alchemists. It is often called numinous which means it is charged with an enormous amount of psychic energy and can occur as an overpowering religious experience.

XXVIII

> We have a similar modulation of themes in alchemy — in the synonyms for the *lapis*. As the *materia prima*, it is the *lapis exilis et vilis* (stone poor and vile. Jung takes this from an alchemical work called The Rosarium Philosophorum, a famous series of 20 woodcuts first printed in 1550). As a substance in process of transformation it is *servus rubeus or fugitivus* (lit. Red man/slave. Red being the rubedo); and finally, in its true apotheosis it attains the dignity of a *filius sapientiae* (lit. Child of wisdom. Sometimes this is equated with the philosophers' stone, for Jung the essence of the Individuation Process) or *deus terrenus* (The image of the sun in the earth, the image of God appearing in gold), a "light above all lights," a power which contains in itself all the power of the upper and nether regions. It becomes a *corpus glorificatum* (The incorruptible body of resurrection in the Christian tradition) which enjoys everlasting incorruptibility and is therefore a panacea (bringer of healing).

XXIX

Giegerich has introduced and addressed this critical difference in his seminal works *The Soul's Logical Life* and *What Is Soul?* describing it, after Heidegger's notion of 'the ontological difference', as 'the psychological difference'. He notes that alchemy symbolically articulated the 'psychological difference', though of course never expressed such a notion in a psychologically explicit way: alchemists said *aurum nostrum non estaurem vulgi*, 'our gold is not the gold of the people'. There are other alchemical sayings such as *Mercurius non vulgi* ('not the common mercury'), and descriptions of the philosophers' stone as 'the stone that is not stone'. These sayings mark a psychological distinction and an 'encompassing both' of the imaginal and the logical, the imaginal substance (the alchemical lead, mercury, salt, gold), and the noetic or notional, but an as yet not fully distilled, dialectical concept in the image: mercurial logic.

'Encompassing both' the imaginal and notional does *not* denote the 'both/and' of metaphor and figural speech, which preserves the sense of a 'natural likeness' and hence keeps consciousness stuck at a naturalistic level. It belongs to dialectical thought, to the soul's *logos*, the unity of identity and difference. The psychological difference which alchemy described as an *opus contra naturam*, the 'work against nature', is the soul's self-differentiation from its former naturalistic (mythic) consciousness.

Let me describe the alchemical notion of the 'stone that is not a stone' dialectically. At first (in the logical, not temporal sense) there is a positivistic statement referring to an actual, empirical thing, a 'stone.' Something is asserted to actually be. Next, this is cancelled out, negated. It is said to be 'not a stone.' Then follows a second absolute negation, it is '*neither* a stone *nor* not a stone.' The positivistic logic of being and non-being is overcome by a second absolute negation, which absolves the being/non-being duality. The statement positing an actual 'stone' is annulled, then preserved. The negation of the negation raises the thought to a higher notional level (is a sublation). From this thinking, embedded in the alchemical imagination, was distilled the notion of the 'spirit in the stone'; a 'spirit' reducible to neither a literal nor imaginal stone. Alchemists called this the philosophers' stone.

XXX

Jung sought to offer mankind a new approach to life which he called Analytical Psychology, and hoped to validate it by finding it a worthy predecessor. After years of searching, he nominated alchemy. This discipline had been practised for over two thousand years in China, ancient Egypt, and Greece. His explicit reasons for choosing alchemy are given in the Commentary he wrote for a little-known yoga text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. This had been sent to him by his old friend Richard Wilhelm who translated it from the Chinese. The text, as Wilhelm describes it, constitutes: 'a development from the earlier alchemical procedures to produce a golden pill, known as the "philosophers' stone" that would create gold out of baser materials and lend men immortality.'

XXXI

The Great Work itself is "an archetypal drama of death and rebirth" that requires all that the adept has to give, for the psyche is the source not only of consciousness, clarity, and reason. It is a natural phenomenon, and in the world of nature "the Heraclitean law of everlasting change, *panta rei*, prevails…" The psyche is "a raging torrent that flows for all eternity in the darkness…" The struggle between the light and the dark, the masculine and the feminine, between the principles of form and matter, is no mere intellectual problem.

> It is the moral task of alchemy to bring the feminine, maternal background of the masculine psyche, seething with passions, into harmony with the principle of spirit—truly a labor of Hercules.

The transformative process is a drama of integration by means of increasing consciousness, one that mysteriously redeems not only the spirit in man, but also the world itself. Jung summarized this in an interview with Mircea Eliade in 1952:

> As a matter of fact alchemy takes up and carries on the work of Christianity. In the alchemical view Christianity has saved man but not nature. The alchemist's dream was to save the world in its totality: the philosophers' stone was conceived as the *filius macrocosmi*, which saves the world, whereas Christ was the *filius microcosmi*, the savior of man alone...
>
> ...The *opus magnum* had two aims: the rescue of the human soul and the salvation of the cosmos. What the alchemists called "matter" was in reality the [unconscious] self. The "soul of the world," the *anima mundi*, which was identified with the *spiritus mercurius*, was imprisoned in matter… it was a question of freeing this "matter," of saving it....

The achievement of the *lapis*, the stone, the gold, is a redemptive union of psyche and matter that produces an "incorruptible body" which arises as a "liberation of the divine soul or pneuma from the chains of the 'flesh.'"

> The psyche previously imprisoned in the elements and the divine spirit hidden in the flesh overcome their physical imperfection and clothe themselves in the noblest of all bodies, the royal gold. Thus the "philosophic gold" is an embodiment of psyche and pneuma, both of which signify "life-spirit." It is in fact... a living being with a body, soul, and spirit, and it is easily personified as a divine being or a superior person like a king, who in olden times was considered to be God incarnate.

Flesh itself "is a synonym for the *prima materia* and hence for Mercurius," which is the Agathodaimon, the spirit of the cold part of nature. So Mercurius, as the arcane substance, "stands at the beginning and the end of the work" and "was believed to contain the opposites in uncombined form as the *prima materia*, and to amalgamate them as the *lapis philosophorum*." In the crude form of the *prima materia* Mercurius is "in very truth the Original Man disseminated through the physical world, and in his sublimated form he is that reconstituted totality."

He said the most important aspect of the dream was "the visibility of the Grail or the Grail's castle"—it was to be seen as real. It was powerful and alive—not a passive tourist attraction as it was to some people in the dream. Ten years previous Jung had discovered that the myth of the Grail was still a living thing in many places in England, "recognized again by poets and prophetically revived" in different forms under changed names. Jung took the dream to mean he should not be preoccupied with India but with what was being lost in the West, symbolized by the quest for the Grail and the philosophers' stone of the alchemists. "The Grail is a symbol of enlightenment" in the West he wrote—the *unum vas*, *una medicina* and *unus lapis* of the alchemists while the Buddha represents the enlightened mind in the East. Buddhists strive to attain the degree of fulfillment and perfection of the Buddha.

XXXIV

Marie-Louise von Franz in *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time* describes the philosophers' stone as one of many alchemical images of the Self, of god in man. It is created by the alchemical processes of active imagination and reflection that seeks to embody the spirit in matter and in nature.

Beginning with the earliest alchemical texts, the philosophers' stone was equivalent to the gold sought by the alchemists. The "stone sent by God" was God's mystery in matter which had a spirit *(pneuma)* hidden in the Stone or in the human body which had to be extracted. This stone was the starting point and the goal of the alchemist's opus and it could turn any metal into gold. It corresponds to the diamond body of Chinese alchemy that the alchemist creates through meditative exercises in order to attain immortality during his lifetime.

In Jungian terms, once one has experienced and consolidated a personal sense of the Self after transmuting the hardships in life (the lead), one can re-enter the body and the world with a transforming perspective (everything is turned to gold). The re-entry becomes the spirit embodied, spirit with a corporeal sense to it.

Several Western alchemists suspected the opus was not literally turning lead into gold but was a meditative development of their inner personality that would then complete itself in the outer world. The "stone" was a kind of immortal body for both Eastern and Western alchemists. In an early Egyptian burial ritual, a column called the *djed* pillar was erected in the grave to represent the moment of resurrection. "One of the oldest Greek alchemical texts," von Franz writes, "celebrates the production of a stone...as a resurrection mystery in which a 'statue' comes forth from the fire reborn."

XXXV

The stone symbolizes the inner god in man as a "son of the universe" (*filius macrocosmi*) and not the "son of man" like Christ because it did not come from the conscious mind but "from those border regions of the psyche that opens out into the mystery of cosmic matter." The philosophers' stone is man's redeemer, like Christ, *and* a god who must be redeemed by man. The alchemist was unconsciously working on redeeming God, not man, and failed to recognize himself as the equivalent of Christ as a symbol of the Self. This is self-evident to the Indian mind and von Franz believes it accounts for the attraction of the West to the Indian spirit. Alchemy prepared a bridge to bring the unconscious contents into consciousness and was a symbolic process that could bring about an inner transformation.

The Gnostics had a similar deep understanding of Christ as a symbol of the Self, but they were inflated by believing the mystery they possessed made them superior to the "formless multitude." They identified with their own light and confused the ego with the Self, forgetting that enlightenment only has meaning when it helps one to recognize one's own darkness and see that dark and light are equals to be united into a third "'free from the opposites,' beyond all moral categories." Von Franz asks:

> Are we today, after two thousand years, mature enough to understand and realize man's divinity without forgetting our smallness and darkness? The phenomenon of the Self, in which all the opposites are united, is...simply inconceivable, a mystery with which one had better not identify, as long as one is in possession of one's normal faculties. Man himself cannot master the uncanny polarity within his own nature; instead he must learn to understand it as an objective psychic content within himself, as a numinous experience which in the past was reserved for the few, but which takes hold of more and more people in the contemporary world. The stone *is* an experience within us, but it is not the ego.

XXXVI

The *Lapis* is an appropriate symbol to represent wholeness in the equation because it occurs both in alchemy and also in the New Testament. In a letter to a man who had a dream of a stone, Jung explains:

> The stone means, particularly in the form of the Philosophers' Stone, the attainment of totality and immutability for which the Stone is a very apt symbol. As Adam, according to certain traditions, was created in the form of a lifeless statue, so the second Adam, i.e., the total Man, will become a stone yet alive, as is said in the New Testament: *transmutemini in vivos lapides*.

XXXVII

The *Lapis* as an actual stone was employed by alchemy to give the goal of the opus some physical substance. The alchemist who made the spirit a mere abstraction could not "feel himself a whole." The stone also has the physical quality of immutability and represents the idea that the goal, once obtained, will not be lost. The realization lasts, like a stone, for a long time "or for all eternity; though alive, it is unmoved…"

The *Lapis* symbolizes a state that is immutable and its presence in the equation as the third stage comparable to Dorn's second stage is understandable. Yet, as Jung states, the split between spirit and nature remains insoluble. By this reasoning, the *Lapis* must have a meaning other than being merely a representation of the union of spirit and matter.

XXXVIII

We stand at the end of the Christian era, an era wherein humanity has expanded upwards and outwards in an unprecedented fashion. But this incredible progress has created a polarity, an opposition in which we feel lonely and separated, cut off from our instinctual roots. Jung pointed out that we in the modern world need to once more seek inside ourselves for archetypal solutions that bridge the seeming opposites: good and bad, sin and salvation, instinct and spirituality. Because the alchemists were seeking the philosophers' stone which would heal all ills, unite all opposites, bridge all chasms, inevitably they touched just those archetypal roots we need to find ourselves.

XXXIX

Interestingly, the alchemical creation myth goes beyond this point, and shows the four elements combining to form the three key alchemical substances: salt, sulphur and mercury. Clearly this corresponds to a progressive development of consciousness, which is much less in danger of falling apart into the chaos of unconsciousness. Of the three, mercury—or Mercurius, as it was personified—was special. It alone was able to join with either of the other two elements, thus reducing the original quaternio into a polarity of masculine and feminine. That split stood for the current state of affairs to the alchemists. Their task was to combine the masculine and the feminine, both in nature and within themselves, to form the magical unity of the philosophers' stone—quite a remarkable mythology to describe first how primitive consciousness arises, then how it progressively becomes more unified, with the goal of a new conscious unity.

XL

> One is reminded here of Niels Bohr's axiom in quantum physics, "The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth," or Oscar Wilde's "A truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true." What is difficult, of course, is to see both images, both truths, simultaneously: to suppress

> nothing, to remain open to the paradox, to maintain the tension of opposites. Wisdom, like compassion, often seems to require of us that we hold multiple realities in our consciousness at once.

Stephen Pepper (1970) identified the varieties of philosophical speculation as "world hypotheses," a term metaphysically uncharacteristic for its provisional nature. Each of philosophy's overarching, globalizing theses, Pepper said, is based on distinctive suppositions or root metaphors. Again, Hillman:

"We see what our idea lets us see." In this perspectival sense, metaphor marks a semantic bifurcation point amidst the always-already at which something new and provisionally decisive is inscribed into experience. Metaphoric ambi-valence is irreducible, singularly ungraspable. It renders the as-if unto perception as from a lacuna, "opening" as possibility and as gap. At the crossroads of the subject, it piles philosophers' stones, marking the leap between the synapses that extrudes signifier and signified, image and concept, from the dark matter of the cognitive fire. In Avens's "more original" experience of "Being," relative and absolute entail one another as kin and shadow.

Everybody knows that he or she has to be drowned and lie like a corpse at the bottom of the green and white water before being resurrected, but this effect goes further and ultimately cures the person. The text says, "It creates peace among mortal enemies and gives life and health back to the sick body," obviously referring to the union of the opposites appeasing the inner conflicts.

Then comes the remarkable passage that I quoted earlier, where Dorn points out that one should not seek what one needs from the outside, for we have it all with or even within us, though it does not come from us. This means that it is in us—as we would say, in our unconscious—but does not come from us; the ego has not made it. If we think the ego does it, we are ready for the psychiatric clinic. Afterwards Dorn continues about the simplicity of nature. Whatever we have said so far is only a recapitulation of the first part of the work, which is called "The Speculative Philosophy" or "The Seven Degrees of the Work." First there is an introduction, which I am not quoting in detail, where Dorn points out that he is speaking of something physical and something ethical or moral, *physica et moralia.* To prevent the idea that it is pure materialistic chemistry or that it is, for instance, a purely ethical sermon in the sense of leaving out nature or the physical aspect, he says:

> I am not teaching you how to make gold for money but how to find the most simple medicine, a remedy by which you can cure the sick metals of the body with metaphysical metals, and how to find a physical philosophers' stone through which the metaphysical metals transform the sick metals of the body into perfect *eleuseria metalla*, in perfect eleuserian metals.

XLII

Dorn then ends with a short passage called "From the Philosophical Study," in which he goes into exuberant poetic praise of the goal. There he says that truth is the highest virtue and a fortress that nobody can conquer. It has only a few friends and is attacked by many enemies, nowadays even by the whole world. But it has a great inner value. Its carcass is the true philosophers' stone, the treasure that cannot be eaten by the moth or rust and that exists in eternity when everything else will be dissolved. This castle of truth has been erected to the destruction of many and to the salvation of many. You will see later that from the Jungian standpoint the one criticism we can make of Dorn is that he does not see the dark side of the Self. He sees the ego and the shadow, but the Self too has a dark side. In other words, that the image of God has a dark side he would not accept; here he is completely at one with the Christian standpoint: that God is only light and only good. But if you watch, you will see that from time to time he says things behind his own back, so to speak, such as:

> This castle of inner truth will destroy many people; it is a cheap thing, mostly despised and even hated. But one should not hate it, but rather love it; it is the greatest treasure, it is loving to everybody and hostile to everybody. You can find it everywhere, and practically nobody has ever found it. Change yourself, the heavenly wisdom says, from dead philosophical stones into living philosophical stones, because *I* am the true medicine, and I change everything which cannot exist into something eternal. Why are you possessed by madness?
>
> Through yourself but not from you [that is, within the personality but not from the ego] is everything which you need and which you wrongly seek outside. There shines in us, though dimly in darkness, the life and the light of man, a light which does not come from us [that is, not from the ego] which, however, is in us, and we must therefore find it within us. It belongs to Him who has put it into us; we can find it in Him, in His light. Therefore the truth is not to be looked for in us [he means the ego] but in the image of God which dwells within us; that is the one without a second. It is the Being and is in itself the whole of existence.

XLIII

> Now irrigate your body with the water of life, i.e, with the word of God. Day and night meditate about it, so that the body has no time to talk or think of anything else. The good earth is a soft heart which is ashamed and humble. Since the fall of Adam, the hearts of men have become hard as stones, and if they are not softened again by the word of God, they will remain stones forever, and so we all become enemies of God till this enmity is again overcome through the highest gardener and his servant, the *mens*. Therefore let us thank God, who thought us worthy to enlighten our hearts with His light and soften it with His word. Go now and try to find the virtue

This is a stage in alchemy that alludes to a so-called second death and then to the *multiplicatio*, and also to the *proiectio*. Again, please do not associate Jungian terminology with that. In general, it is the stage where the philosophers' stone, after it has been made in the retort, has to be destroyed again several times and then remade, a kind of complete repetition of the work, which generally is done four times. This repeated destruction of the philosophers' stone and its remaking was called the *rotatio*, a rotation through the four clements. After that the retort is usually broken or opened, and then begins the stage of the *multiplicatio* through projection. The idea is that the philosophers' stone, which is also a form of the mystical gold that the alchemists were trying to make, is made and is then thrown upon other, unclean matter that is, other matter which has not been included in the process, like ordinary iron, ordinary lead, or any other material. It shows then a transformative quality, for it transforms these other materials through *proiectio*, projection. It transforms them into gold and has what one could call a positive, contagious effect on other materials. If, as an alchemist, you have made one bit of material of this mystical gold in the retort, then, when you open it, it emanates onto other material. Sometimes that is varied by the idea that you have not made solid but liquid or drinkable gold, or a kind of elixir, and then the *proiectio* multiplication corresponds to the healing afterwards for other people and other things.

XLIV

> The solution can be compared to philosophical insight: just as through the solution one dissolves the bodies [he means in the retort], so the doubts of the philosopher are dissolved through his insight. Then follows philosophical love, which creates the frequency of study which corresponds to the congelations of the alchemists, or the first union in the retort [that means the first solidification of things in the retort). And as through frequent exercise the mind of the philosopher is sharpened, so through repeated alchemical washings the different parts of the chemical body are made subtle; just as through virtue the philosopher becomes one personality, so also in the composition

the different chemical bodies are put together in their smallest parts; also, just as *potentia* solidifies the personality in its philosophical virtues, so the *fixatio* of the volatile parts in the chemical body solidifies the philosophers' stone, so that the different vapors cannot evaporate anymore. Just as through these philosophical exercises one acquires a power which can even perform miracles, so the alchemical medicines show their power through projection in their perfection.

XLV

The result is a "new heaven," the secret truth, or the philosophers' stone. It is identical with the God-image in the human soul. The whole procedure is like an active imagination performed with symbolically meaningful substances, the addition of human blood meaning a complete devotion to the work. (in older times human blood meant the participation of the soul; the signing of pacts with one's blood meant that one put one's whole soul into the matter.) The end result is also described as a four-petaled yellow flower, exactly as in the Chinese text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Dom's recipe runs: Take the inner truth, and your élan vital to it, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the capacity to link opposites.

XLVI

Poseidon wanted to court Thetis, but it was prophesied that any son of Thetis would be greater than his father. This theme suggests that the children of the watery realm carry something numinous about them, and it also opens up another theme which is relevant to Cancer. This is the relationship of mother to son, and the relationship of Cancer to its children in general, biological or otherwise. Poseidon desisted from his courtship, and Zeus (who in some versions of the story wanted her himself) decreed that Thetis must marry a mortal, rather than endanger the gods by bearing a child who might threaten the greatest of the Olympians. Thus the sea goddess, who is also a prophetess in her male form of Proteus, can mate only with men. In other words, her creative powers must be channelled through human consciousness and human expression. This seems to parallel something which Jung has said that the transformations and developments of the psyche cannot occur as if by themselves, but depend upon the interaction with the ego, even though the relationship, like Thetis and her mortal lover, is that of something divine with something human. This curious paradox is also portrayed in alchemy, where the act of releasing the divine Mercurius, the philosophers' stone, from the womb of the earth depends upon the participation of the human alchemist, because the alchemical art 'makes perfect what nature leaves imperfect.' Jung quotes the seventeenth-century mystic Angelus Silesius:

know that without me
Cod can no moment live;
Were I to die, then He
No longer could survive
God cannot without me
A single worm create;
Did I not share with Him
Destruction were its fate.
I am as great as God,
And He is small like me
He cannot be above
Nor I below Him be…
...I am God's child, His son,
And He too is my child,
We are the two in one,
Both son and father mild.

XLVII

Sometimes Jung writes about the Self as an archetype – that is, one of the various ordering or patterning factors in the unconscious. Thus, just as Moira is a self-portrait of that primordial instinct within nature which allots boundaries to material life and avenges transgression of those boundaries, the Self, with its impressive range of symbolic representations – diamond, circle, mandala, philosophers' stone, flower, treasure, androgyne, golden ring, etc. – is an image of that instinct within the individual to evolve into himself, to become the unique and single and meaningful whole that was always there in potential but which takes the entirety of a lifetime – or many lifetimes – even to partially unfold. Put another way, the Self is an image of the religious instinct, that aspect of the psyche which aspires to an experience of unity or divinity. When Jung writes about it in this way, the Self is the archetype, the Great Round which encompasses all aspects of the psyche and welds them into a unique whole. Aniela Jaffe phrases it as follows:

> The archetype of the self is 'nameless, ineffable,' a hidden X whose concretisations are indistinguishable from God-images. Individuation has to be understood as the realisation of the 'divine'; in man.

XLVIII

Sooner or later, genuine individuation requires of the individual a willingness to give up the claims of his ego-personality in favour of the self as a supraordinate authority, and to renounce them without forfeiting himself. Individuation always involves sacrifice, a "passion of the ego." But it "does not mean just letting yourself be passively taken: it is a conscious and deliberate self-surrender, which proves that you have full control of yourself, that is, of your ego." Nevertheless, you are driven to this free or

voluntary self-surrender by the self, by its striving for development and actualisation. “The more compendious personality… takes the ego into its service”; the ego becomes the representative and executor of the self in the world of consciousness. The reciprocal relation between ego and self, or man and self, underlies the paradoxical saying of the alchemists that the philosophical stone – a symbol of the self – is both “son” and “father.” “Up to a point we create the self by making ourselves conscious of our unconscious contents, and to that extent it is our son. That is why the alchemists called their incorruptible substance which means precisely the self - the *filius philosophorum.* But we are forced to make this effort by the unconscious presence of the self, which is all the time urging us to overcome our unconsciousness. From that point of view the self is the father.” To express it in another image: man’s wholeness, originally hidden and “imprisoned” in the unconscious, proves in the course of individuation to be the actual prison, albeit a “compendious” one. This discovery of their captivity will horrify small-minded people, but “the man who is inwardly great will know that the long expected friend of his soul, the immortal one, has now really come, ‘to lead captivity captive’ (Ephesians 4:8).”

The Ascendant ruler in Jung’s natal chart is Saturn, as he was born when that 30° segment of the ecliptic known as Aquarius was rising due east of his birthplace, and Saturn is traditionally the lord of this zodiacal sign. Jung’s natal Saturn does in fact fulfill Porphyry’s more detailed requirements for the *oikodespotes*, as it is strong by virtue of being placed in its own sign of Aquarius as well as rising in the east and forming benign relationships to several other planets. Not surprisingly, Saturn figured prominently in Jung’s writing throughout his life. Saturn is constantly mentioned in the *Collected works* due to its overwhelming importance in alchemy. Here it was said to ‘reign’ during the initial phase of the alchemical work, known as the *nigredo* or ‘blackening’ - a process which Jung associated with the necessary breaking down of the ego’s defences prior to any authentic engagement with the unconscious - and was understood to be the primal substance or matrix out of which eventually emerged the ‘philosophers’ stone’, the chief alchemical symbol of the Self.

L

For millennia alchemists sought the philosophers’ stone, the miracle substance believed to be the key to all the secrets of existence. Turning lead into gold or granting immortal life were magic tricks compared to the limitless potential of the stone. The quest to find the philosophers’ stone–thought to be the central element needed for the perfection of the human soul–was fueled by some of the prime questions of human existence: What am I? Why am I here? How has this world come to be?

In the beginning of the spiritual path, the spontaneous revelation of true nature serves the process of our liberation, transformation, and enlightenment. We experience the richness and variety of the qualities and forms and dimensions of true nature, each of which reveals precise understandings about who we are and what reality is. But when being is truly alive, realizing the nondual depth of our nature does not bring an end to its revelations. It is in this sense that true nature is the *lapis philosophorum*, the stone of the philosophers, the elusive key to all the secrets of reality. In its unyielding purity and incomparable liberating power, the philosophers' stone reveals itself as the mysterious true nature of all reality–both spiritual and ordinary–in all times and all places, yet without ever being limited to being anything in particular.

LII

When true nature has not only force and power and energy and presence but also contains understanding and illuminated cognition, then it attains a diamond-like quality, experienced as objectivity, clarity, and precision. This is what I call the philosophers' stone, the *lapis philosophorum* of the alchemists. They thought that whoever found the philosophers' stone would be able to unlock all the secrets of existence. The stone has all the qualities and faculties necessary to illuminate and discriminate reality, to distinguish what is false and what is true.

LIII

The philosophers' stone as I will use it here refers to true nature in general, in whichever way it expresses itself. When it expresses itself in a diamond-like form, it is more clearly recognized as the key that opens the secrets of reality. But any way that true nature manifests is illumination. There is also a deeper truth about why I'm not restricting the philosophers' stone to any one form or view of true nature, a deeper truth that connects all its forms and experiences, whether diamond-like, liquid, gaseous, empty, spacious, or altogether formless. We will further explore this truth as we go on. What is important for us to understand here–we can understand it in any of the turnings, but it becomes most obvious in the third and fourth turnings–is that without the philosophers' stone without this miraculous, magical whatever, which is difficult to confine to any one word, there is no illumination. Without it, the transformation of human consciousness is not possible. Without it, we would continue living as semiconscious animals, as brutes, as clods of consciousness. Human consciousness, if we consider it in the conventional sense, lacks two truths that I think of as the twin truths of the philosophers' stone. First of all, true nature is inherently incorruptible. The philosophers' stone cannot be corrupted; it cannot be destroyed; it cannot be distorted. It retains its purity regardless of what our experience is and what is happening. Whenever we discover it, we recognize it as a purity

that is totally unmarred. The second truth of true nature is its illuminating and liberating power. It is the power of illumination, the power of liberation, the power of enlightenment, the power of discrimination and intelligence, the power of creative revelation, the power of consciousness and awareness.

LIV

We will explore in detail who the prime mover is and what is responsible for realization. What is responsible for the arising of clarity, understanding, and spiritual experience? Every time we have a spiritual experience, it is nothing but the philosophers' stone appearing in one form or another. The philosophers' stone or true nature is pure spirit, but we will see as we go on that spirit is. It is every single thing and all things. It is every single thing among all other single things, and it is all things as the unity of the collection of all single things. This gets very interesting and is part of what I mean by the secrets of existence. Besides being fascinating and beautiful and magnificent, the self-illuminating light is helpful. Illumination is not merely illuminating, it is also compassionate and loving and tender and considerate. It is contagious and infectious. The more we are illuminated, the more we want others to experience that also. We can't help but be generous and giving, because self and other is one, and the nature of self and the nature of other is one; it is true nature giving itself to itself.

LV

By emphasizing the radical and miraculous otherness of true nature, I am pointing to the quantum leap in consciousness and awareness that it makes possible. In this encounter, we discover the philosophers' stone. We might not know that it is the philosophers' stone or what it can do, but we recognize that it is something wholly different, something so unique and so itself. This direct encounter with the purity of true nature is one important factor that seems always to be present in spiritual activation. There are also other elements that we will explore as we go on. And some elements of spiritual activation remain mysterious. Why does it happen in one experience and not another? Why does it happen to one person and not another?

LVI

What is this true nature that is any and all of these things? This becomes the salient question, and it is what I have been referring to as the philosophers' stone. The alchemists spent millennia trying to find it. They considered it the final result of the magnum opus, the great work of spiritual and material transmutation. Some alchemists thought they could make it, others believed it had to be discovered. Some thought it was white, others red. Some thought it was a stone, others a liquid or gas. And some understood the philosophers' stone to be

a metaphor. I am not teaching anything about alchemy here; I am borrowing the idea because it fits with what I am trying to say about true nature. The key to the secrets of existence, true nature, is so mysterious and so invisible that we can only see its faces. We can only experience true nature in the manifold ways it presents itself.

LVII

The nonhierarchical view shows us that if we stay with where we are and understand it, everything can be revealed. Our direct and immediate experience is the philosophers' stone that holds the key to all secrets and all possibilities because true nature is all possibilities and it is what we are. The alchemists sometimes called this magical agent and transformative catalyst "the elixir" or "the water of life" to refer to its vibrancy, aliveness, power, and newness. And when the emphasis is more on unlocking the secrets of existence, they refer to it as the philosophers' stone.

LVIII

In other words, we cannot try to avoid objectification, delusion, or reification. The mind cannot try to be careful; the heart cannot try to be protected; the individual consciousness cannot try to get somewhere. All of these are based on the illusion that is already exposed in the boundlessness of true nature. We see from the nondual perspective that there is no separate self that has its own will or that can do anything on its own. Seeing everything as the same reality, the same truth, the same light, helps us understand how the illumination of these obstacles can happen. I've never tried to avoid reification, objectification, or delusion, because I never thought I could. It has always been clear to me that it is not possible, and I have never been afraid of these things. I recognize that the true protector of practice is the because philosophers' stone. True nature protects itself through its liberating combustion, through its quality of red sulfur. By protecting itself from these dangers, it protects us because the philosophers' stone is what we are.

LIX

When we recognize this fluidity of view, this radical openness of the view of totality, our practice becomes liberated from various delusions of self-centeredness, and our attitude and orientation align with an expanded view of reality. We can see that, in some sense, the self-expression of true nature as total practice is the philosophers' stone expressing its illuminating power of red sulfur. The dynamic self-expression of true nature sparks the individual consciousness to constantly realize

further ways of expressing true nature, which is true nature realizing more of its possibilities through the faculty of individual consciousness.

LX

Awakening to the realization of the purity that is at the heart of reality means recognizing that this is what we are, and when I say this is what we are, I don't mean that the usual self is true nature. I mean that the usual self is set aside or dissolved and what remains is true nature that has self-recognition. Awakening can be more or less complete depending on our readiness, on the way that true nature is manifesting itself, and on the magic of the philosophers' stone. We recognize that there are many kinds of realization because there are many ways that true nature manifests itself.

LXI

You may have noticed that I have asked more questions than I have answered. I am presenting the magic show that is true nature, the magic show that is you and that is reality. The philosophers' stone here reveals its nature as the mind intoxicated with knowing and the heart delighted with loving. The philosophers' stone, which is our true nature, is ceaselessly knowable because its knowing cannot be exhausted. Freedom is then simply being the philosophers' stone in whichever way it is revealing itself. We are what we are fully and totally, without ever exhausting the ways in which we know ourselves.

The more we understand true nature and are comfortable with it, which means there is certainty that we are true nature, reality will simply continue to unfold and manifest new possibilities. We can become less self-reflective, not concerned with our state nor with anyone else's. We naturally respect ourselves and others regardless of what state anyone is in. The usual issues of wanting to be seen or appreciated, of being special or not, disappear from our mental universe. Instead, our lives become the natural discourse, the natural expression, of true nature in human relationship. Whoever holds the philosophers' stone can unlock the secrets of reality. The philosophers' stone is our true nature, the nature of everything. There is only one philosophers' stone. If we recognize what is what we are, if we love it and revere it and plumb its depths, it will take us through its wormholes to various aspects of reality. When the heart is open, we see that all reality is an organ for true nature to reveal its possibilities. For thousands of years, alchemists looked in all the corners of the universe for the philosophers' stone but they neglected to look in the heart of human beings.

The black sun, *sol niger*, is an analogous image from Western alchemy that links consciousness with the unconscious, light with darkness, into a paradoxical oneness whose shine is an expression of the *lumen naturae*, the light of nature, a light of darkness itself. The alchemists considered it as a *prima materia*, but, like the Golden Flower, its illumination unfolds as a symbol and indication of the mysterious Philosophers' Stone, and the *ultima materia*, psychologically as the Self, the goal of the alchemical work. As a symbol of the Stone and the Self, the black sun avoids the tendency to view the goal as a static whole. Its dynamism is that it carries the darkness within itself as the deconstructive principle such that the Self is also Non-Self, and the Stone not a Stone. It is a oneness that is also other. There is no illumination without darkness, no wholeness without limit. It is also a oneness that does not require that differences subordinate themselves to a unifying principle. In fact, it breaks out of any idealism that situates all of reality in some form of subjectivity alone.

At the conclusion of his work, Jung's imagination was captured by the ideas and metaphors of alchemy, with its dragons, suffering matter, peacock's tail, alembics and athanors; its red and green lions, kings and queens, fishes' eyes and inverted philosophical trees, salamanders and hermaphrodites; its black suns and white earth, and its metals–lead, silver and gold; its colours–black, white, yellow and red; and its distillations and coagulations, and rich array psychic of Latin terms. All became the best possible expression of a mystery as yet unknown which enunciated and amplified his maturing vision of the parallels between alchemy and his own psychology of the unconscious. All this and far more Jung saw as projected by the alchemists into matter. Their effort was to bring about unity from the disparate parts of the psyche, creating a 'chemical wedding'. This Jung saw as the moral task of alchemy: to unify the disparate elements of the soul, both personal and ultimately cosmic, and thus to create the goal, the lapis or philosophers' stone. Likewise, Jung's psychology works with the conflicts and dissociation of psychic life and attempts to bring about the mysterious 'unification' he called Wholeness.

I have been reading Jung and his alchemical work for most of my adult life and continue to do so. There is something about the arcane and impenetrable quality of alchemy and Jung's passionate reading of it that continues to draw me back into its mad obscurities, its dark matter, and its fantastic images. My basic laboratory is the analyst's consulting room and the library, with its old texts and tomes. "Pray, Read, Read, Read. Read again . Work and you shall find," says the *Mutus Liber*, an old alchemical text aimed at the production of the Philosophers' Stone. And yet, my love of alchemy draws me down to the basement, from library to lab, from texts to textures, from weighty tomes to the weight of lead–to the al-chemistry of the soul, to its fire and heat, to athanor and alembic, holding and sublimating, combustion, distillation, cooling, cooking, transformation, multiplication, and refinement–to what comes alive in the work. I remain passionate about alchemy and am deeply drawn to its images and objects, to its smells and colors, to its aesthetics, art, and artistry, to its graphics and symbolic designs, and to its hermetic vision of the transformation of matter–to what matters to the soul and to Jung's reading of it. For me, alchemy is a madness, a journey into the unknown and unimagined. Its *nigredo* is poisonous, a "blacker than black" darkness. But if one has the skill, good luck, or divine favor, it may be a *pharmacon*, a poison that also heals, and in the healing, one can find a light that shines in the midst of darkness and is said to reveal a miracle that Jung called the Self and the alchemists, the Stone.

LXVI

Jung ultimately saw in alchemy that the work of facing the shadow was a paradoxical union of opposites at the core of psychological and alchemical work. In the chapter, "The Paradoxa," in his late work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung speaks of the importance of the opposites to the alchemists and how they attempted "to visualize the opposites together but to express them in the same breath." In this vision, the sun and its shadow are intimately linked and reflect the archetypal and cosmic structures in which consciousness and shadow are eternally at play. This great conjunction suggests the alchemical lapis and the Philosophers' Stone, where the *prima materia of the shadow and the illuminated goal of the opus are mysteriously bound together.* For the alchemically oriented analyst, the shadow is not only the beginning of the work, it is the end as well.

LXVII

Alchemy is a vast subject, and the Philosophers' Stone is one of its most enigmatic ideas. Historically, alchemists argued with one another about the materials, procedures, and nature of the Philosophers' Stone, and nearly every alchemical treatise proclaimed its own recipe as the correct one for the achievement of alchemy's sought-after goal. Typically, there was very little overlap between the views of the adepts. It was not unusual at the

beginning of an alchemical work for the writer to start out by mercilessly denouncing other adepts, calling them fools, charlatans, puffers and the like, and proclaiming that only he had achieved the secret of the “Great Work.”

LXVIII

The black sun is a complexity. Its “blacker than black” dimension shines with a dark luminescence. It can open the way to some of the most numinous aspects of psychic life and can give us a glimpse of the miracle of perception at the heart of what Jung called the *mysterium coniunctionis* and of the Philosophers’ Stone. One might imagine such a vision in the Tantric rites of Kali who was worshiped at the cremation grounds where she copulates with her consort shiva on the body of a corpse burning on a funeral pyre. Kali worshipers enact ceremonials associated symbolically and ritually with the annihilation of the ego. These rituals often depict the death of the ego, out of which, it is said, the “human being arises shining." How is it possible to embrace Kali, the darkness that kills? Who is left to embrace her?

I submit that this is one plausible reading of Jung, but it remains unclear exactly what the nature of such a projection entails and just what it is that is projected. Ultimately, the Arcane Substance that Jung often spoke about remained as mysterious as his understanding of the unconscious, and to assume that this projected substance was simply inside our subjectivity misses Jung’s deeper understanding of “psychic reality,” even if it was not adequately developed. In addition, the problem of projection itself requires a number of philosophical and metapsychological presuppositions that are taken for granted in classical analysis. Going beyond these assumptions requires a fundamental shift in metapsychology if not ontology. Schwartz-Salant reconstructs the notion of “projection” and concludes that using this idea as a framework for understanding what the alchemists are talking about is inadequate. Alchemical “experiences do not always, or even primarily, fit into an inside-outside structure.” In its place, Schwartz-Salant constructs a field theory, an intermediate realm between subject and object, mind and matter. While he applies his field theory primarily to the analytic interaction, it is a move that also has consequences for how we understand both Jung’s work with stone and the nature of the Philosophers’ Stone.

In our attempt to express psyche's need to substantiate, we have come to see that the Stone to which we have turned is a "stone that is not a stone." It is rather a Philosophers' Stone. It is a Stone linked to the *lumen naturae* of *sol niger*, a luminous vehicle, a central mystery of alchemy. It is an alchemical achievement involving the death of the ego out of which something emerges shining and yet the shining was already there at the core of darkness. It is a part of the complexity of darkness itself, reflecting the death and shine of a positivity that is perhaps no positivity at all, but rather an image/idea requiring a liquification and/or displacement of the subject. The Stone requires learning how to die, how to decreate narratives of redemption, and thus allowing one to see, with Zen-like astonishment, the perception of the ordinary, the sheer mereness of things. As the poet Theodore Roethke once wrote:

> Near the graves of the great dead,
> Even the stones speak.

Typical of Jung's style, he defines a symbol as the best possible expression of an as yet unknown fact, which is "none the less known to exist or is postulated as existing" and "cannot be differently or better expressed." In this definition, the symbol points both to and beyond itself to a mysterious presence/absence, both to the flesh of a visible mystery and to the mystery of an invisible arcane substance. The archetype-in-itself is an unconscious absence not unlike the notion of God or the Philosophers' Stone. Both have multiple divine and symbolic names, but, as Jung points out, just what the philosophers meant by the arcane substance has never been quite clear. In a 1946 letter to Pastor Max Frischknecht, Jung wrote "the concept of the unconscious *posits nothing*, it designates only my *unknowning*." Still, for Jung, we can proceed "as if" we know something by virtue of the filth and flesh of archetypal images, as our best expressions and manifestations of psychic reality, without taking his reality literally in traditional metaphysical terms–either as simply psychological or simply material.

Following the actual notebooks of the alchemist George Starkey (a.k.a. Philalethes), Principe unmasks the seemingly symbolic processes by creating a chemical version in his own laboratory of "'animated' Philosophical Mercury" and its production of a "philosophical egg" out of which, over time and with proper heating, there emerged a glittering and fully formed tree in a laboratory flask. For Principe, this was "'the Tree of Hermes'," the philosophical tree which for the alchemist would have been "vivid and unquestionable proof that he had found the 'entrance to the palace of the king,' that is, the crucial threshold leading to the Philosophers' Stone." Principe reflects that "[f]or the historian, the reality of this Philosophical Tree indicates unambiguously that at least some of the imagery of chrysopoeia [gold-making, seeking the Philosophers' Stone], bizarre as it might seem, stems from the literal appearance of reacting chemicals" and must be taken literally. For Principe, the results of such experiments must have served to encourage the alchemists in pursuit of their goals. Yet, while his discovery is indeed very provocative, it is also interesting that

> Starkey's continued experimentations apparently did not lead to the Philosophers' Stone; otherwise, it's doubtful he would have ended up in debtor's prison. The failure to obtain the stone, despite encouraging results such as gold's volatilization or its germination into a glittering tree

raises for me the question: Why were there so many alchemical failures to produce the Philosophers' Stone? From my perspective, the reason for this is that limiting the philosophical tree to a naturalistic perspective reduces it to a literal, chemical phenomenon It is interesting to compare Principe's version of the philosophical tree with the way Jung imagined

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LXXIII

The Philosophers' Stone was considered to be the ultimate achievement of the "Great work" of alchemy and the elusive goal of alchemical transformation. The Philosophers' Stone has been described in numerous ancient manuscripts, and in many recipes with considerable disagreement about its nature and its appearance as well as how it was to be discovered or made. These disagreements have followed the Stone throughout its history and into its transformation to its psychic equivalent: the Self of contemporary Jungian analysis.

Both the Stone and the Self continue to be difficult notions to understand. Warren Colman notes that Jung's thinking about the Self is "full of complexities, paradoxes and uncertainties." Roger Brooke has described Jung's concept of the Self as an "enigmatic complexity." Lyndy Abraham calls the Stone the "arcanum of all arcana," and, in *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung writes: "What the old philosophers meant by the *Lapis* has never become quite clear." Although the Stone was often identified with the

unus mundus–the principle of the one world–it has also been known by a variety of names many of which were collected by William Gratacolle in his "Names of the Philosophers' Stone," from the 1651-1652 publication, *Five Treatises of the Philosophers' Stone*. Among the names of the Stone, we find it referred to as "Chaos, a Dragon, a Serpent, a Toad, the green Lion, the quintessence, our Stone Lunare, Camelion, ... blacker than black ... radicall humidity, unctuous moysture … urine, poyson, water of wise men." and the list goes on, disseminating into a continuing complexity of images.

LXXIV

Jung proposed a solution to the perennial problem of unity and multiplicity in the figure of Mercurius, who lies between opposites and is the means of bringing them together. As the mercurial body that bridges the divide, he was called a "mediator." Mercurius links heaven and earth and, as such, is both "prima materia" and "ultima materia"–and, therefore, called "lapis" and "the stone," as the great principle of unification. But Jung was also aware that this unity was subject to a deconstruction and a division. He notes that Mercurius "is a unity in spite of the fact that his innumerable inner contradictions can dramatically fly apart into equal numbers of disparate and apparently independent figures."

LXXV

The art and alchemy of transformation is a large and complex subject. There are many approaches to understanding the *opus alchemicum* and its goals of solification and the Philosophers' Stone. My approach to this work is from the perspective of a Jungian analyst, which means privileging a certain orientation and point of view. It is a point of view that continues to develop within, around and on the edges of the Jungian tradition and, for me, it remains an open inquiry that continues to intrigue and surprise me.

Like Jung, the alchemists were interested in fundamental and elemental change, classically imagined as the transformation of lead into gold, a base substance into a noble one. Jung's revolutionary insight was that the alchemists were not simply concerned with the "material world," but were speaking in symbols about the soul and were working simultaneously as much with the "imagination" as with literal substances of their art.

LXXVI

Since the black sun/sol niger is both *prima materia* and *ultima materia,* they are equally names of the Philosophers' stone, linking light and darkness and other opposites. I have recently added the notion of chaosmos, the unity of chaos and cosmos. Each of these images of the Philosophers' Stone contains a

subtle phenomenology that, if followed, opens a unique epiphany, a way into understanding the stone's multiplicity. Despite the many names of the stone, the alchemists stressed that it personified unity and consisted in one thing and one thing only. Morienus wrote: "For it is one Stone, one med'cin in which consists the whole magistery," and the *Scala Philosophorum* stated: "The Stone is one: Yet this one is not one in Number, but in kind." Perhaps what the alchemists had in mind was embodied in the stone's most paradoxical and mystical description *lithos ou lithos,* the "stone that is no Stone," In this description, the enigmatic quality of the Stone shines forth–ultimately what Abraham called the arcanum of all arcana." Is this then the mystery of the great work, the goal of the opus, the mysterious Philosophers' stone? Is this then the "med'cin" Morienus wrote about that contains the whole magistery? Does it then carry its self-negation within itself, a *via negativa* that separates it from literal nature and from any simple positive being or presence? Or rather, is it an unknown, an absence, an obscurity, a darkness, or perhaps, more accurately, a fundamental paradox that links all binaries into an expression of the *mysterium coniunctionis*? If so, the med'cin is also a *pharmacon*–a poyson as well as a healing draught.

LXXVII

> For the principal pair of opposites is the conscious world and the unconscious world, and when the two come together, it is as if man and woman were coming together, the union of the male and the female, of the light and the darkness. Then a birth will take place, Therefore in alchemy the *Lapis philosophorum* [the Philosophers' Stone], which is the reconciling symbol, is often characterised by the union of the male and the female.

In order to bring about what he called the union of the conscious world and the unconscious world, Jung, like the Alchemists and the Kabbalists, emphasised the extraction of spirit from matter.

LXXVIII

What lies beyond these seven doors of the treasure-palace of the alchemical work? One alchemical work says that a divine mirror is discovered; "When a man looks at himself and sees himself in this, he turns away from everything that bears the name of gods or demons, and, by uniting himself with the Holy Spirit, becomes a perfect man. He sees God within himself ... This mirror is set up beyond seven doors ... which correspond to the seven heavens, beyond the sensual world, beyond the twelve mansions."

The stages of the alchemical process are variously and confusingly described as being three, four, seven, eight, or twelve in number. The lack of information and the purposeful occultation of these processes make commentary difficult. Bald statements such as "alchemy consists of the extraction of pure Sulphur, Mercury and Salt from the raw material; the fusing of these materials into a new and unknown substance called 'the Philosophers' Stone,'" seem initially helpful. Certainly sulphur, the hot, active spirit of alchemy, and quicksilver (mercury), the receptive and passive soul, were indeed considered central to the alchemical process. Salt corresponded to the basic constituents of the body.

"Wherever there is metal, there are Sulphur, Quicksilver, and Salt – spirit, soul and body," says Basil Valentinus. It is by the marriage of sulphur and quicksilver, conceived of metaphorically as male and female king and queen, that the alchemical process is concluded.

LXXIX

The image of the alchemical king and queen in congress is the highest human conception of union. We return to our pivotal word knowledge once more, where sexual union and sacred knowledge are one and the same. The mystic's union with God, the alchemist's production of the elixir or living stone, are symbols of this union. The Islamic alchemist sheikh Ahmad Ahsa'i, bids us to contemplate "the living stone" of the alchemical process: "Meditate and understand this Sign... for such a body is precisely the sign of the dwellers in Paradise, 'for they have bodies in which exist all the attributes, laws, and actions of bodies, but such bodies enact the actions of Spirits and pure Intelligences; they perceive what the celestial Souls and angelic Intelligences perceive, just as the latter perceive through their own essence what Souls and bodies perceive.'"

This is nothing less than a description of the production of the diamonic body of light, into which the physical body is transfigured by the study and practice of the mysteries. The alchemical way is one method of knowing what the angels know, or being married to Sophia. The last end of the work is the production of the philosophers' stone, which is an alchemical reprise of the Black Stone sacred to the Lady of the Cubic Stone herself, Cybele, the Ka'aba, the Black Virgin transformed into fiery gold. "Alchemy is the soul-price of the cosmos: it teaches us to relate the infinite to the mundane, to find the presence of the divine in the daily circle of being. The process is a spiritual code used by those who seek the Stone."

LXXX

In psychoidal alchemy, as in all alchemy, though we use many terms and descriptions, we are talking about one mysterious entity. We may call this entity God, the *prima materia*, or many other terms. The essence about which this book speaks can never truly be explained; but it can be experienced and transformed, and through its transformation, transform others in turn. Sophia, though a psychoidal figure in her own right, is an aspect of this One Thing.

Every process of alchemy and every operation performed involve this One Thing. This is the Philosophers' Stone, the secret of all secrets and the magic of all magic. The Philosophers' Stone starts out in an undifferentiated and chaotic condition. The alchemist must discover the true nature of the *prima materia*, subject it to certain differentiated procedures, and then components. These components consist of a number of pairs of opposites, depicted as the mysterious sulfur and mercury or often as the king and queen. The last pair of opposites is very appropriate for us because, in many ways, Sophia is the queen who is separated from the One Thing and married to the king, who is also derived from the primal unity.

LXXXI

Since alchemy first separates the opposites and then reunites them, Sophia must marry her masculine partner. The union of the opposites creates the Philosophers' Stone, so that the wedding of Sophia creates this ultimate mystery. Beginning with the godhead who of its own free will manifests in the psychoid realm as Names, which are understood as the Divinity's manifestations of its own opposites, psychoidal alchemy proceeds to work with these opposites first separately, and then to conjoin them. Their marriage creates the stone, which is the divinity transformed and made unique. Beginning with the unknowable and impersonal One Thing, we end with the incarnation of an individuating God unique to ourselves. This is accomplished through the wedding of Sophia.

LXXXII

The alchemists speak of the Philosophers' Stone as a living being that possesses many aspects in common with the ally. The Stone is unique, unites the higher and lower worlds within itself, has magical power over creative processes, and is involved in a love relationship with the alchemist. All of these characteristics are true of the ally as well.

Although Sophia and God are two halves becoming one in the ally, Sophia does not disappear as an individual being, but she is simultaneously part of the ally. As one with the ally, Sophia ceases to be a collective goddess and becomes unique and individualized. Therefore, rather than creating a new collective image of the feminine, psychoidal alchemy personalizes the experience of that image.

LXXXIII

The strange paradox that humans are considered god-like and are yet the slaves of demons is also part of the esoteric tradition. There are psychoidal forces and entities that control us, unless we release the potential found within ourselves to control them and prevent them from dominating us. The struggle for freedom and divinity, and the need to order the forces of the psychoid is described in alchemy, for the Philosophers' Stone starts out in a chaotic condition dominated by the other forces of the universe. However, through the alchemist's effort, it gains the strength to bring order to the psychoid world and escapes the dominion of the forces that inhabit it.

LXXXIV

For a woman alchemist, Sophia represents the Philosophers' Stone perhaps more clearly than for the male alchemist. Though at the psychological level Sophia represents different things for men and women, especially in regards to their work with the self, as a psychoidal figure Sophia is a force or power that must not be related to specific gender, any more than may the *filius*, or Mercurius, or other alchemical images. Gender is a symbolic form chosen by a specific entity. Sophia appears as a feminine being, but she is not a woman. Women, as much as men, may embrace her with love and ecstasy as a divine partner and lover.

LXXXV

According to the *Wisdom of Solomon*, she is a subtle and penetrating spirit moving easily, able to go through all things. It is quite remarkable that the ability to penetrate all things is one of the attributes of the Philosophers' Stone, for in this penetrating ability lies its capacity to transform. Penetration is often considered a masculine attribute, and it is interesting that Sophia possesses it. In Aion, Jung relates penetration to splitting and so to discrimination, "which is the essence of conscious realization." Von Franz notes that in Egypt the person who has gone through the process of resurrection properly has gained two powers: the power to assume any shape and "to move about through anything in this material world, a kind of ghostlike being which could walk through closed doors and manifest in any desired form. That is the highest goal of life after death… and the alchemists connected this idea with their concept of the philosophers' stone, that divine nucleus in man

which is immortal and ubiquitous and able to penetrate any material object. It is an experience of something immortal lasting beyond physical death."

LXXXVI

Sophia is the essence of wisdom and love for all souls. She raises a person to flights of ecstatic wonder and bliss and yet she includes the ordinary and the mundane. No other spirit inspires so much love, and for many it is this love that encourages them to undertake the rigors of inner alchemy and go through the hardships that such a path entails. For one caught in the love of Sophia the goal becomes union with her. The Philosophers' Stone, to be complete, must include union with her. This union exists not only between the human soul and Sophia, but also between Sophia and the masculine aspect of the divinity. Love exists between the masculine god and Sophia as much as between Sophia and her human partner. After all, alchemy finds its completion in the *coniunctio* between Sophia and her masculine counterpart, for the Stone is the embodiment of wisdom and power. The product of this union is the ally, or the *filius*. The ally, without sophia, would lack the fullest capacity to relate and to love and would be incapable of completing its union with its chosen individual. The ally always contains within itself Sophia, for Sophia is its mother, as the masculine aspect of power is its father. Lyndy Abraham, in speaking of wisdom, writes that the Philosophers' Stone or pure love essence is born of the union of power and wisdom... Wisdom is the female aspect of the Philosophers' Stone or universal medicine."

LXXXVII

The description in this quotation of the *anima mundi* is all but identical with the description of the Philosophers' Stone, and it is clear that the *anima mundi* is the secret *prima materia*. Notice, too, that the author locates her in the middle place, being a spiritual essence neither celestial nor infernal, in other words, belonging neither to heaven nor to the underworld. The spirit of the world, or *anima mundi*, is a great mystery, and forms part of the psychoidal worldview in two ways. It is in and of itself a psychoidal being, and as the animating principle of the world is neither spirit nor matter. Furthermore, it is the special power sought by the alchemists from which they hoped to create the Philosophers' Stone, In this sense, the Stone would be the *anima mundi* transformed, purified, and multiplied in power and effectiveness. Psychoidal alchemy seeks to discover and work with Sophia as the *anima mundi*.

LXXXVIII

Fire is a celestial spirit, a force or power that can incarnate as matter and, as it does, gains the capacity to transform matter and in fact becomes the Philosophers' Stone with all of its power to purify, transmute, and enlighten. Fire incarnate is the psychoidal Stone and is a source of infinite growth and sustenance that never exhausts itself. As such, fire is one of the greatest mysteries of alchemy. Nor is there any doubt that this fire was related to the feminine being we know as Sophia:

> Moreover, they affirme her to be of that nature that no fire can destroy her, which of all other descriptions is most true, for shee is fire her self, having in her a portion of the universal fire of

> nature and a secret celestial spirit, which spirit is animated and quickened by God himself, wherefore they also call her their most blessed stone. Lastly, they say shee is a middle nature between thick and thin, neither altogether earthy nor altogether fiere, but a mean aereal substance–to bee found everywhere

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LXXXIX

The imagery of spring and new birth is closely related to the images of destruction in the *Aurora* because they refer to an internal process occurring within Sophia herself and, most likely, within her bridegroom as well. The children symbolize new beginnings, movements within the divine couple that must be killed in order for the energy that would have gone into them to be held back and used for transformation. While the children are killed, and the arrows filled with blood, the wines are pressed and the barns filled with corn. More importantly, the bridegroom and the ten wise virgins enter the bedchamber and impregnate Sophia. All other forms of expression, all other developments are sacrificed in order that the true child, the Philosophers' Stone, or *filius*, may be born. The *filius*, as we have seen, is the union of Sophia and the masculine aspect of the godhead. The slaughter of the children means that no growth can occur within either Sophia or God until their union is achieved. Not only does Sophia sacrifice her previous form, she gives up all independent and creative activity for the sake of the one truly creative act: union with God and the birth of the *filius*.

XC

Ash is the "diadem of the heart" and the "pure foliated earth" and seems to be related to the glorified body purified of all the "darkness of the soul, and of the black matter, for the wickedness of base earthiness has been separated from it." The ash is the residue of the body that has undergone severe purgation and purification; it is therefore the most pure aspect of the body to which the soul is added in order to create the glorified body, or the Philosophers' Stone. When, therefore, Thomas asks that the ashes be mixed with the permanent water he is saying take the purified body that is free of taint and mix it with–what? The permanent water is another key symbol in understanding this process.

Alchemists often relate their permanent water to divine water, which dissolves the body into itself and unites with it, so that the water becomes earth as well, or the earth becomes water. This water perfects the body, allowing it to become the stone. The original form is lost in the water, in preparation for the generation of the new form. However, in working with alchemy we must realize that there are many levels of the work, and that the same image can have different meanings at the different levels. By the time matter has been reduced to ashes, the form no longer exists. The water does not at this level serve to destroy form, but to create it by the union of itself and the ashes. The seed has already germinated when ash and water are brought together to create the higher form:

> The secret of our Art is the union of man and woman: the husband receives the tingeing spirit from his wife. The union of husband and wife coagulates the female principle; and if the whole be transmuted into red, we have the treasure of the world of which Synon says: "If the water be changed into the body, the body is changed, first into earth, then into dust and ashes, and you have what you want."

XCI

From a less traditional perspective, Saturn in alchemy, as the *lapis philosophorum*, is connoted by the glowing stone that Philemon holds in his hands in Jung's painting, This is the same stone that Jung placed at the centre of the Mandala in the painting following his encounters with the Librarian and the Cook. In the legend for this painting of the gem that lies behind Atmavictu's face, Jung declared that the tone 'is certainly the Lapis Philosophorum,' and that '[PHILEMON] gave the stone.' According to the seventeenth-century alchemist Johann Isaac Hollandus, one of many alchemists whom Jung was fond of citing in the *Collected Works*, "[PHILEMON] is concealed in Saturn. The Stone, called the Philosophers' Stone, comes out of Saturn." The meticulous care with which Jung inserted these Saturnian connections into the text and paintings of *Liber Novus* suggests a very deliberate use of symbolic references layered over a genuinely spontaneous vision that he was endeavouring to understand, in large part through the hermeneutics of astrology.

XCII

This figure is *iuvenis* rather than senex, and seems to be, as subsequent images suggest, a humanised representation of Phanes, Jung's Orphic god of the new Aquarian Aion. The temple in the heavens to the left of the figure in the painting is the same domed structure as Philemon's temple, although it is white rather than gold. The 'four streams of Aquarius' emanate from the jewel-like Philosophers' Stone in the preceding painting, and the stone, as Jung indicated, was "brought" by Philemon and is portrayed in the old magician's hands. Describing Philemon in one of the *Black Books*, Jung related him directly to 'the four streams':

> The daimons become reconciled in the one who has found himself, who is the source of all four streams, of the source-bearing earth. From his summit waters flow in all four directions. He is the sea that bears the sun; he is the mountain that carries the sun; he is the father of all four great streams; he is the cross that binds the four great daimons.

XCIII

The image of the iron wall, like that of the iron ball, represents a psychic condition in which the unconscious and its energy have been unified into a single whole confronting the ego. In alchemy, "iron" is a synonym for the *prima materia*, the initially contaminated matter that needs to be purified;

"silver" is already the purified essence of the "feminine" aspect of matter and only needs to be brought into a union with "gold for the "philosophers' stone" to appear. The silver mountain consists of two images: "silver" standing again for the already purified, receptive emotional equanimity of the unconscious, and "mountain" for the Self, the experience of wholeness that the ego initially finds impossible to integrate. (In Zen, one does not ascend the mountain; at a certain point it simply collapses.) All these images refer to the meditation complex as the ego works to build it up and merge with it, and before it transforms into its archetypal core, the Self, when that occurs, the experience of enlightenment ensues.

XCIV

The longing for this regressive union with the Self is expressed in various back-to-nature movements, childish fantasies, and certain addictions. The progressive union with the Self, by contrast, requires conscious effort in transcending ego limitations and is depicted by images such as the Kingdom of God and the alchemical philosophers' stone or gold, or experienced as the *unio mystica*, the mystical marriage between the soul and God.

XCV

A perusal of Western traditions analogous to those of the East points out the psychological differences between the two cultures. Western mysticism, with very few exceptions, is highly personal, emotional, and religious. Eastern mysticism, again with some exceptions, is primarily impersonal, intuitive, and philosophical. Western alchemy, on the whole, is externally oriented: the alchemists worked with matter in order to produce the miraculous philosophers' stone that they believed would embody the essence of all being and bestow immortality on its possessor. Eastern alchemy, in its most evolved form, is internally oriented, seeking through the practice of meditation to extract the germ of immortality from the body of the practitioner and then to bring about a union of this personal germ with the universal Mind or Tao.

XCVI

Jung's last book, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, gives a final account of his researches in alchemy. The concluding chapter deals with the symbolism of the "greater" *coniunctio*–the union of opposites through which the *lapis philosophorum*, the "philosophers' stone" was to be produced.

The conjunctio, or alchemical “marriage,” was the last procedure through which the alchemists hoped to produce the philosophers’ stone. The task of the *coniunctio* was to unite previously “purified” substances that existed in a complimentary but opposed positions in relation to each other.

XCVII

The Gnostic idea of gathering the Seeds of Light and the alchemical notion of fixing the “shining white soul” are direct analogics, in projected form, of the process of meditation. The Seeds of Light and the “fiery sparks” of the World Soul that need to be gathered together or fixated in the philosophers’ stone or gold refer to the naturally dispersed flow of psychic energy that must be gathered together into a concentrated point of consciousness. (The Seeds of Light would be the archetypes in their original, purely energetic manifestation, while the World Soul refers to the collective unconscious.) Such psychic unification is the goal of meditation. And enlightenment is the experience of the original unified Collective Unconscious or the Self before its dispersal among the “ten thousand things.”

XCVIII

It is usually said that Meribah here means “quarreling,” but we must reject this interpretation. As noted, *meri* was an Egyptian word for “water,” and water from the smitten rock is the main ingredient of the Meribah story, though it is actually referring to spiritual waters. So *Meri* in “Meribah” obviously signifies water, called “the waters of Meribah.” In addition to Numbers 20, where Meribah and the connection to water appears, Psalm 106:32 refers to “the waters of Meribah,” and “the waters of Meribah at Kadesh” is found at Numbers 27:14 and Deuteronomy 32:51. Meribah is not a place of worldly reality, so Meribah is obviously an allusion to the unconscious or to the spiritual “waters of the unconscious.” It is no longer the waters of Beer-sheba that symbolize the unconscious depths but the “waters of Meribah.”

Later, the alchemists understood the “mystery of the rock producing water” as the analogy of their own extraction of the aqua permanens, or “spiritual waters,” from the Philosophers’ Stone, the “stone of the wise.” They also equated Miriam with Maria Prophetessa, the ancient female alchemist. Names and words beginning with *Mer, Mir, Mar,* and so on are usually connected with water in myth and legend, and this is not only true of the Middle East.

XCIX

The adept may join the Higher Self and the Seven Powers and, in fact, he may even *become* one of the seven, as he is one of the parts of the Self, the agent of the Self in matter. All of this is true of Jesus the man, who becomes one with the Son of God, the Christ. Through his individuation process, Jesus has overcome all of his worldly desires on behalf of the Self and God, which amounts to total self-sacrifice. For this he wins the right to join the Self and God at death for eternity, *and this is possible for any other human being*, though there would perhaps be few takers, because of the necessary sacrifice of the world.

Yet even the ordinary believer and follower, without being an initiate into the deeper Mysteries, is symbolically resurrected with Christ, albeit in a lesser sense. In his everyday way of thinking and values, he will be unified with Christ in that he is unified to a degree with his own inner Self, the "Christ within." He is no longer "dead" in the way that an atheist is "dead," in that Christ enlivens and enlightens his mortal state. The nonbeliever may thoroughly dislike his state, but he is nevertheless condemned to mere material existence. For the believer, resurrection of the soul after death in some way is part of the promise. As the first dream of my processes stated, "There is no such thing as death, only change." A further point is that the medieval alchemists identified the freed spirit of the Philosophers' Stone with the resurrection of Christ.

C

We should mention again that, in this context, the choice of the symbol of the Stone for the human body acquires a complementary justification: the body, as a completed, organized, and stable Nature is a "fixed" thing as opposed to the instability of psychic principles and the volatility attributed to "spirits"; so not only is the relation of Sun, Gold, and Fire with the body (directly or through the equivalent symbols) very frequent, but when the same spiritual interior being has acquired the supernatural stability of the regenerated the corporeal principles are elevated to a higher plain, and the "two are made one" in a "spiritual corporeality"; and the word that serves once again to express that corporeality will be this same Stone: the Philosophers Stone, 'The hermetic imperative is: "Transform yourselves, ye dead stones into living philosophical stones" – *transmucamini de lapidibus mortuis in vivos lapides philosophicos*.

CI

In the hierarchy of the Seven, every "closing" also establishes a quality by means of which one is attracted automatically to the next principle. For these interior experiences one could employ the image of a nucleus (or kernel) that lets the influence of a magnetic field in which it enters act upon it, allowing itself to be drawn into and identify with the nucleus, in turn, of the field–except that it detaches itself and becomes independent again once that identification is perfect. It then goes on to a higher force field in which the same phases are repeated: until it has traversed the entire hierarchy, fixating it and resealing all the powers–powers that, in turn, have allowed into their dissolutions

universal and nonhuman forms of vision and power–in the full possession of the recomposed corporeality.

At this point we return to the cipher language of *dosing*–exact quantities in "mixtures" of active and passive, attraction and repulsion, abandon and mastery–the so-called science of balances, concerning which it has been taught: "lf we could take a man, dismantle him in order to *balance* the natures in him and return him to a new existence, such a man would no longer be able to die"–moreover, "Once this equilibrium has been obtained, beings are exempt from change, no longer altered or modified." It is the supreme stability of the Philosophers' Stone, responding to the command of the Arab alchemists. "Make ye immortal the bodies," which expresses the *other* nature's way of being: that of the no-longer-men.

Because of the equivalence of "dissolve" and "elevate," of "coagulate" and "descend," multiplication can also be called the "circulation" of the substance that, by the power of Fire, is obtained in the hermetically sealed vessel–seven times, according to some authors–which substance, when subtilized into vapor, is raised, condenses upon touching the upper part of the vessel or *athanor*, and is reprecipitated in the form of a sublimate that transmutes a part of the remains below as *caput mortuum*. When because of the greater heat the substance reascends, it transports this part with it, in order then to be condensed and re-descend with an even more energetic "tinting power," which in turn acts on a further part of the substance, and so on successively. We have spoken of this merely chemical symbolism before.

CII

"Matter cannot be created or destroyed," says the scientific law of conservation. "But it can be transformed," replies the alchemist. God's Great Work is the Creation itself and sets in it the signatures and correspondences by which it may evolve. Everything created has life–not human life, but a life according to its proper nature. Alchemy has always treated matter as its *prima materia* from which the divine spark can be kindled into awareness of matter's potential. The alchemical process concentrates on isolating the prima materia of creation so that the evolution of matter might ensue, for as with matter, so with humanity. The whole chain of creation releasing its divine sparks, rising through the planes of existence in a joyful return to the primal unity–such is the vision of alchemy. The philosopher's search is for wisdom and the alchemist's search is for the philosophers' stone, the keystone of the earth's structure, the *lapsit exillas* (stone that was rejected) that fell from heaven and from which all matter is formed. In this stone is encoded the cipher of life's mysteries–the male and female components that are divided in the outer world but are joined in the inner realm. In the language of alchemy both wisdom and the philosophers' stone are described as "a gift and sacrament of God and a divine matter, which deeply and in diverse manners was veiled in images by the wise."

CIII

I behold how all things in the
aether are mixed with pneuma,
I see in spirit how all things
are sustained by pneuma:
Flesh hangs itself upon soul,
Soul is upborne by air,
Air hangs itself upon aether.
Fruits rise up from the depth,
A child is lifted from the womb.

The spirit is the inner corollative of the flesh and no life can be reproduced in our world. Without a corresponding ensoulment on the inner world.
The conception of a child is the mightiest alchemy, but while the birth of a child necessitates a "choice" between two opposites–a decision for one gender or another as a requirement of earthly life–the work of the alchemist, which is an attempt to be born on the inner world, necessitates the reconciliation of opposites in the philosophers' stone. The true secret of alchemy is that the operator becomes the stone.

CIV

Alchemy is the soul price of the cosmos: It teaches us to relate the infinite to the mundane, to find the presence of the Divine in the daily circle of being. Used by those who seek the philosophers' stone, the process is, like the Tree of Life, a spiritual code or system of correspondences through which to relate everything microcosmically and macrocosmically. The search for the philosophers' stone consists of refining the soul, purging it of elemental influences until all that remains is a single unit–a perfectly tuned microcosm reflecting the macrocosm. All matter is a mystery. The processes of alchemy are a ladder we can use to transcend time and space until we stand at the highest point of creation, which is God.

CV

If the Grail legends are the epitome of Catholic Europe's inner Mysteries, then those of Christian Rosenkreutz are the underlying Mysteries of Protestant Europe after the Reformation. In the tradition of the Master Men of Celtic tradition, Rosenkreutz enters the mountain of the goddess and lifts her veil. He goes on a quest for inner wisdom and vouchsafes himself the champion of the ignorant, the sick, and the tormented. In The *Chymical Wedding* he unites king and queen and is himself united with Lady Venus, who represents inner wisdom. He can be identified with Hermes, Christ, and Perceval at the moment of their accomplishment of the philosophers' stone, the Redemption, and the Grail.

CVI

In the nigredo, the Wounded King encounters the Wasteland, Christ enters the tomb, and Osiris is scattered by Set. The king of the alchemical process and his flesh are sundered and putrefaction sets in. In the albedo, a sevenfold bath is prepared, the bones of the scattered love are restored by Isis, the White Mass of the Holy Mother–in which the Virgin offers up her child–is celebrated, the Wounded King drinks from the Grail, and the heavenly dew of the planets is bestowed. In the rubedo the glorified body is resurrected, Isis joins with Osiris to produce Horus, the Grail knight succeeds his Wounded King and marries his master's daughter, and the philosophers' stone is achieved.

CVII

The foundation Mysteries of the native tradition speak of the apportioning of the body of the Goddess to form the world. Likewise, the foundation Mysteries of the Hermetic tradition are those of the scattered God. Their reunion has been celebrated from Sumeria to Ireland: from the ritual mating of the Goddess's representative with the king to the Gnostic bridal chamber. Red King and White Queen are God and Nature, Christ and Sophia, Mercury and Venus. The lapsit exillas is matter personified by its guardian, the Anima Mundi or Sophia. Only when the quintessential embraces the prima materia can the rejected stone become the keystone of creation. The Rosicrucian alchemists were correct in their appraisal of Christ as the philosophers' stone because he, of all created humanity, has achieved not only birth and death, but also resurrection in his created body.

CVIII

> [Insight or consciousness] is most appropriately represented by moly. This is a gift which can only be given to human beings, and to very few human beings at that. The most essential thing about moly is that its root is black and its flower milk-white. Now the first steps toward insight, which is a kind of simultaneous comprehension of all that is good, are rough, unpleasant and difficult, but when a man has bravely and patiently surmounted the trials of these beginnings, then, as he progresses, the flower opens to him, as in a gentle light.

The plant appears again in alchemy, where it is associated with the philosophers' stone. In some texts it is made synonymous with the golden flower of alchemy.

CIX

"Drinking the waters of Mnemosyne" means to remember the knowledge we once knew, and it is beautifully expressed in the words of the Valentinian Gnostics, giving us a glimpse of how Orphism influenced the later Gnosticism, since all of these ancient cults penetrated one another. Gnostic means "knower" and one might ask the question, what is it the Gnostic knows? This was their answer: "what liberates is the knowledge of

who we were, what we became; where we were, where into we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed; what birth is, and what rebirth," What the Gnostic knows according to that formula can be thought of as the essence of what one learns when one drinks the waters of Mnemosyne. The knowledge is the preconscious knowledge of who one was before one came into ego existence, and the same information conveys what one will be after one passes out of ego existence.

The next direction given by the Orphic text is that the initiate must announce: "I am a child of Earth and of Starry Heaven." That is to say he already has to know whence he came, It is like the alchemical notion that to make the philosophers' stone one needs a little bit of it to start with, which is to say that the process is not strictly rational. The Orphic is expected to have acquired the knowledge of whence he came and his announcement will be his entree. "I am a child of Earth and of Starry Heaven" means psychologically that he is aware of his transpersonal origin; he realizes that his essence does not derive from his personal experience or from what we call his ego being, he has experienced his archetypal individuality. He knows the same sort of thing that Jesus referred to when he said: "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." This knowledge will permit him to drink the waters of recollection.

CX

Carl Jung (1875-1961), the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, addressed the issue of illusion as it relates to alchemy in a different way. He advocated the idea that alchemy had both an esoteric and an exoteric manifestation. He believed that the esoteric or popular aspect of alchemy was centered on the preparation of the Philosophers' Stone—a magical substance capable of changing base metal silver and gold. Exoteric or mystical alchemy regarded the transmutation of metal as "symbolic of the devotional system by which sinful man could be transformed into a perfect and immortal being." The focus of exoteric man alchemy was on "a pill or elixir prepared from minerals and metals, which might confer immortality." The interweaving of mystical and alchemic ideas was an inherent part of the intellectual as well as the emotional and psychological processes.

> Movement is the nature of the mind as much as it is the nature of light. All that tries to arrest, to hinder, or to confine the free, infinite movement of the mind, is ignorance whether it is caused by conceptual thought, desire, or attachments.

CXI

> Like the philosophers' stone, the Great Symbol purges from the mind the doss of Ignorance *(Avidyā)*; and the human is transmuted into the divine by the spiritual alchemy of *yoga*.

The sky, humans, sticks and stones, the wind as well as human-made artifacts in the universe of matter, and phenomena are assigned their own form of causal force or energy. Natural objects–plants or animals–have an identity that exists externally (outside their physical structure), and that reality–the natural and spiritual life represents a universal meaning for a particular culture. Therefore, the notion of reality must be gauged against the anthropocentric attitude perceiving it.

CXII

An Egyptian alchemist regarded by most authorities as authentic is Zosimus of Panopolis who lived during the third century of the current era. This alchemist and writer reportedly wrote an encyclopedia of twenty-eight books detailing all the knowledge about alchemy that had accumulated in the previous five or six centuries. Zosimus is one of forty authors included in a compendium of alchemical writings that was probably collected in Byzantium in the seventh or eighth century C.E. He promoted the theory there existed a substance that could transform matter instantly. Zosimus called this magical material "the tincture" or "the powder", which was translated to "elixir." It was eventually called the Philosophers' Stone (*Lapis Philosophorum*), "a stone that is not a stone, a stone unknown and known to all."

CXIII

Jâbir wrote about the Philosophers' Stone: "Our stone is one, one medicine, to which we add nothing, from which we take nothing away, only removing that which is superfluous. The Philosophers' stone (Latin: *lapis philosophorum*) was a central element of alchemy symbolizing perfection, enlightenment, immortality. It is most often described in terms that have a religious nature, Words are used to praise its unique spiritual quality and transcendental nature.

It is a Stone and not a stone in the sense of having the nature of any one stone; it is fire, yet it has not the appearance, or properties, of fire; it is air, yet neither has it the appearance, or properties, of air; it is water, but has no resemblance, or affinity, to the nature of water. It is earth, though it has not the nature, or appearance, of earth, seeing that it is a thing by itself.

CXIV

There is no definitive definition of *prima materia*. This is because alchemists had personal definitions for the materials they used and the methods they employed in the search to discover it. The *materia* tended to be partly chemical, partly mythical, and partly philosophical. "It is incorrect to maintain that the alchemists never said what the *prima materia* was; on the contrary, they gave all too many definitions and so were everlastingly contradicting themselves." The identified materials included quicksilver, sulphur, salt, vinegar, water, blood, urine, excreta, dew, hair, and a variety of

animal and plant parts. The Philosophers' Stone is an "invisible symbol, and perhaps one of the most interesting and mysterious, because it has given rise to many visible symbols, great thoughts, and discoveries in the realms of philosophy and science." Lama Anagarika Govinda wrote in the *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (1969), "The eternal vision behind it [the Philosophers' Stone] is that of the prima materia. The original substance, the ultimate principle of the world."

CXV

Emphasizing the issue about color in laboratory work, Mircea Eliade wrote in *The Forge and The Crucible*, "Transmutation, the *magnum opus* which culminated in the Philosophers' Stone, is achieved by causing matter to pass through four phases, named from the colours taken on by the ingredients. Eliade uses the Greek terms to identify the colours: "melansis (black) [portrayed as a dead man or a crow], leukosis (white) [symbolized by the pelican piercing its breast with its beak], xanothosis (yellow) [the sower sowing seeds in a feild], and iosis (red) [the wedding of the king and queen or the starry lion]. The issue ofcoloruu, that is, the references to the four phases of the laboratory process was mentioned "in the pseudo–Domocritecan [writing] *Physika kai Mystika* (fragment preserved by Zosimus)–that is, in the first alchemical writing proper (second to first century B.C.E.)"

CXVI

"As to the true man, he makes gold because he wishes by the medicinal use of it to become an immortal." It is neither mystical nor magical for individuals to seek the golden pill or to possess the supernatural qualities ascribed to the Philosophers' Stone. To say that it is human nature trivializes the merit and in some instances the value of such a rare commodity. Nevertheless, the elixir of immortality or the essence of self-realization, by any name, is a constant feature of every person from an early age. The *prima materia* is the human intellect, the *latent goldness* is the human will or wisdom, and *immortality* is human achievement.

It may be said that every person possesses the essential elements to produce the golden pill of immorality. A primary ingredient of the alchemic process is the spiritual principle identified with mercury, "which is far from being the metal which we ordinarily know by that name. The Mercury which the alchemists sought often in strange places is a hidden and powerful substance." However, the mercury sought by the alchemist is that unique element hidden within the human body. In fact, it was called "Mercury of the Wise." It was said that he who can discover it is on the way toward [alchemic] success.

> If life is passed aimlessly with death ever coming unexpectedly, the bones of the body will dispense, the four elements (of metal wood, water, and fire) will scatter and the deluded consciousness will transmigrate through another realm of existence without knowing what form it will take in another life.

CXVII

C.A. Burland wrote, “The alchemical idea was bound to arise from observation of the world and the life of the human being–as soon as metallurgy was developed. Smelting was often associated with sexual union or the sacred marriage of male and female ores. Fire was the agent of unification. Chinese alchemists believed duplicating the gestational process by which a child is engendered would generate the Philosophers’ Stone. This analogy is implicit in the writings of Western alchemists (they say, for example, that the fire under the receptacle or container must burn continuously for forty weeks–the period necessary for the gestation of the human embryo).

Religion in both the Eastern and Western worlds had a role in the development, spread, and decline of alchemy. Taoism in the East must be credited with being a major contributor to alchemic appreciation and practice. The search for immortality was a primary motivation among the Taoists and when Buddhism offered a different concept of immortality available to everyone through meditation, proper diet, and observance of fundamental canons, the Taoists’ exclusive approach decreased in importance. It continued to be a recognized religion that endorsed the value of immortality.

CXVIII

Alchemy was a vast cauldron of image and symbol, a chaotic mixture of the reasonable and the bizarre, the endearing and the terrifying. At the core of it all stood the fascinating image of the philosophers’ stone, the magical substance with the power to transmute metals, heal the sick, reveal the mysteries of the spirit, and bestow immortality on its fortunate creator.

CXIX

To create gold or a healing potion, most alchemists believed that they must first create the philosophers’ stone, and that it alone had the power of effecting transmutations. The stone had another capacity as well; to open its possessor to the Divine mysteries. Although there were other beneficial side effects to it, essentially the stone was the goal of all alchemical endeavors. With it all other goals could be achieved; without it they would be difficult or impossible to attain. In all their efforts and all the processes they devised, the alchemists’ ultimate intention was the creation of the philosophers’ stone. The major processes by which the alchemists accomplished this task remained constant throughout alchemy. The alchemist had to find the right material from which to generate the stone. The nature of this material remained one of the greatest secrets of alchemy that was never revealed, possibly because there was no one answer. There are hundreds of recommendations, hints, and veiled

allusions to the identity of this elusive substance that was called the *prima materia*. Alchemists would obtain a substance that they believed to contain the mysterious *prima materia* and subject it to a number of operations. The aim of these processes was to destroy the original form, and to reduce it to a preformed state. This preformed state was the *prima materia*. In other words the *prima materia* was matter before it was formed, which the alchemists called "chaos" among other things. Having reduced the substance to this chaotic state, the alchemists believed they had actually "killed" the original material. Hence the process by which matter lost its original form and became reduced to chaos was known as the *mortificatio* or the *nigredo*. The alchemists described the process as having a black color and often a bad smell. The fluid, chaotic state was often equaled with mercury. Thus, alchemical mercury was frequently considered the *prima materia*, though alchemists were quick to point out that the mercury they used was not ordinary mercury. Mercury contained within itself a sulfur, which if removed and separated from the mercury, would later reunite with it in such a way as to create a new form. As the sulfur and the mercury interacted, fought with each other, and then reunited, the matter underwent successive changes If the sulfur and mercury united in a balanced way, the philosophers' stone would emerge.

CXX

Fire was a central symbol in the alchemical lexicon. *Calcinatio*, the process of burning a substance and reducing it to ash, served as a method of purification. Fire also effected separation, splitting the ash or body of the material from the spirit, which rose to the top of the alchemical vessel as vapor. When the alchemists aimed specifically at creating a vapor, the process was called *sublimatio*. And when they wished to reunite the body with the spirit, they performed *coagulatio*, which turned liquid back to solid, or reunited the vapor with the ash. All of these processes aimed initially at creating the desired *prima materia* and then transforming it in a variety of ways, until finally it transmuted into the Philosophers' stone, Even then the alchemist might not call it quits! Through the process of *multiplicatio*, he could augment the power of his stone both qualitatively and quantitatively. Theoretically, the power with which the stone could be invested was unlimited, and the *multiplicatio* could be repeated many times.

CXXI

Later in the morning, Balinas practiced the seven-stepped initiation prescribed by the Emerald Tablet. At temples and shrines, he would also use this time to instruct the priests in the Hermetic Mysteries. At noon, when the sun shone directly overhead, he meditated again to store up the mutable force and maintain his connection to the One Mind. He spent his afternoons working with the

general public, healing with the energy he had accumulated and discussing the hidden truths of which everyone should be aware. At sunset, he meditated once again, to review the day's events from the highest perspective he could obtain and to crystallize their truths within him. He spent his evenings distilling the wisdom of the day, making of it a "sort of permanent state of inspiration." Since he ascribed immense importance to the power of imagination in self-development, Balinas probably used this time to enter into an introspective conversation with his own soul in order to refine his deepest essence–a process the alchemists, who called themselves the "Sons of Hermes," would later describe as the creation Philosophers' Stone.

CXXII

Psychologically, this marriage of the powers of the Sun and Moon, the union of solar consciousness with lunar subconscious, creates a new state of consciousness the alchemists named the Lesser Stone, In the final three operations of alchemy, the Lesser Stone becomes the Greater, or Philosophers', Stone–a permanent state of enlightened consciousness. From an individual's viewpoint, Conjunction is the birth of a new reality through the union of thought and action. Sometimes at this stage, the crucial interaction is with another person, who at first seems totally opposite, but who gradually guides us into a completely new way of looking at things. Among alchemists, one of the most fruitful of these spiritual alliances occurred between two remarkable and completely different men.

CXXIII

According to the French metaphysician Rene Alleau, there are five stages in the evolution of matter. First is the chaotic One Thing, the prior elements which contain the inherent possibilities of the cosmos. Next comes the First Matter, the elementary organization of the inherent possibilities, which Alleau saw as equivalent to the human unconscious or instinctual mind. Third is Mercury, the first purification which releases feelings and imagination, as the female mental component dominates. Fourth is Sulfur, a more profound purification in which reason, thought, and the male mental component dominates. The final stage is Salt, the union of the male and female components which is the Quintessence of the Great Work. The ultimate Salt is the Philosophers' Stone, which represents transcendence and direct knowledge — matter made completely aware.

CXXIV

> Thus will you obtain the Glory of the Universe
> All Obscurity will be clear to you
> This is the greatest Force of all powers,
> because it overcomes every Subtle thing
> and penetrates every Solid thing.

The five lines of the fifth rubric of the Emerald Tablet describe a fifth element, what the alchemists called the Quintessence. The fifth element is something very special–something beyond ordinary matter, akin to the winkling light of the eternal stars. It is formed in the Fermentation process and released with the rising vapors of Distillation. According to the alchemists, these powerful vapors condense into a red elixir that "cures defects in corrupt metals" as well as in the human body.

Under the right conditions, after repeated distilling of the isolated essence, a process known as sublimation occurs, in which a red powder magically forms on the sides of the flask's neck as the rising vapors cool.

According to the alchemists, the ultimate transmuting substance formed during the final stage of alchemy is the Greater Stone, or Philosophers' Stone. This transmuting substance can then be added or "projected" into any base material, which can be anything from lead to the human soul. A miraculous transmutation takes place that immediately perfects any substance, changing metals into gold, soul into spirit. The sixteenth-century alchemist Gerard Dorn advised his fellow seekers to "transmute yourselves from dead stones into living Philosophical Stones" and to project their highest aspirations into reality. Every one of the alchemists were unceasing in their praise of the Stone, "You shall see the Stone of the Philosophers go forth from the bedchamber, from his Glassy Sepulchre," wrote Heinrich Khunrath in *Amphitheatrum Sapientia* (*Amphitheater of Wisdom*, Hanover, 1609) "in his glorified body, like a Lord of Lords, from his throne into the Theater of the World. That is to say, regimented and more than perfect, a shining carbuncle, most temperate splendor, whose most subtle and depurated parts are inseparably united into one. The whole mass shines red like a ruby, which redness is a sign of a perfect fixation and fixed perfection; permanently giving color and tingeing, fixed in all trials, even in the examination of the burning Sulfur itself and the devouring Waters, and in the most vehement persecution of the Fire, always incombustible and permanent in the Fire as the Salamander."

CXXV

Having directly experienced the higher truths, Siddhartha could have chosen to continue to savor them within himself in a kind of spiritual onanism that would have grown into an impenetrable arrogance over lesser men. Instead, he chose to incarnate it within himself, to live by it, to speak of it, to teach it to others. In that way, he made it *real*. The alchemists called this coming together of divine revelation and human determination the Philosophers' Stone, It is an enlightened and enduring state of consciousness that can literally change reality,

This Stone is the perfected First Matter within us, the purification of the soul and its union with the spirit. On the physical level, the Stone is the state of consciousness that is psychokinetically active, just as the One Mind creates and controls the planets and the stars. The ultimate perfection of soul or matter cannot be achieved by only using "scientific" methods that narrowly focus on certain aspects of reality. To succeed, the alchemist must enter the whole spectrum of reality and appeal to the archetypal forces so that the four elements of the Below and the three elements of the Above unite, thus combining "the powers of both the Above and the Below." In the words of Saint Paul, whose Fermentation experience on the road to Galilee is well known to Christians, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:42).

CXXVI

"The Philosophers' Stone is called the most ancient, secret or unknown, natural incomprehensible, heavenly, blessed sacred Stone of the Sages," declares the *Sophic Hydrolith*. "It is described as being true, more certain than certainty itself, the arcanum of all arcana–the Divine virtue and efficacy, which is hidden from the foolish, the aim and end of all things under heaven, the wonderful epilogue of conclusion of all the labors of the Sages–the perfect essence of all the elements, the indestructible body which no element can injure, the Quintessence; the double and living mercury which has in itself the heavenly spirit–the cure for all unsound and imperfect metals–the everlasting light–the panacea for all diseases–the glorious Phoenix–the most precious of all treasures–the chief good of Nature."

Obviously nothing in the universe can top this Stone, which is supreme on all the levels in which it manifests. Whether it is the state of mind of a winning athlete, the focus of an inspired speaker, the altered consciousness of a mystic, the outcome of an experiment, or the ultimate union of the One Mind and the One Thing, the stone is perfection. It is the crystal-clear diamond that began as a lump of coal, the soft, impure, and unshaped First Matter.

CXXVII

The best way to grasp the overall pattern referred to in rubric six is to envision all the precepts of the Emerald Tablet within one drawing or image. That was exactly what artist Matthieu Merian had in mind when he began a very special engraving for inclusion in Daniel Mylius's *Opus Medico-Chymicum* (The Medical-Chemical Work), which was published in 1618. Merian titled his work Tabula Smaragdina, which is Latin for "Emerald Tablet," and his goal was to incorporate all the truths contained in the tablet in one awe-inspiring vision, This beautiful work on the following page shows in dramatic detail the birth of the Philosophers' Stone as it leaves heaven and enters earth. The picture immediately joined dozens of other alchemical mandalas which alchemists used for meditation, and many medieval alchemists sat staring at it for hours trying to absorb its power.

CXXVIII

The laughing, extroverted Sun King holds a scepter and a shield indicating his authority and strength over the rational, visible world, but the fiery dragon of his rejected unconscious waits in a cave beneath him ready to attack should he grow too arrogant. The melancholy, introverted Moon Queen holds the reins to a great fish, symbolizing her control of those same hidden forces that threaten the king, and behind her is a chaff of wheat, which stands for

her connection to fertility and growth. The bow and arrow she cradles in her left arm symbolize the wounds of the heart and body she accepts as part of her existence. In simplest terms, the king and queen represent the raw materials of our experience–our thoughts and feelings–with which the alchemist works. The king symbolizes the power of thought, ultimately the One Mind of the highest spirit. The queen stands for the influence of uncontrollable feelings and emotions, which are ultimately the chaotic One Thing of the greater soul, The much anticipated marriage of the king and queen produces a state of consciousness best described as a feeling intellect, which can be raised and purified to produce a state of perfect intuition, a direct gnosis of reality. "All Obscurity will be clear to you," says the tablet of this state of mind. The goal of alchemy is to make this golden moment permanent in a state of consciousness called the Philosophers' Stone and it all starts with the marriage of the opposites within.

CXXIX

The seventh ray of the Azoth points to the realm of the queen and contains the symbol which stands for both the metal silver and the Moon. This ray is either colored purple, indicating royalty, or silvery gray, representing the Moon. The lunar or silver temperament is feminine and reflective, with a personality that tends to be volatile and manifested on multiple levels. This type of person needs outside influences to come truly alive. In relationships with the lunar person, you end up doing most of the talking, but still waters run deep, and the lunar lover is sensuously supportive.

The final, seventh circle shows an androgynous youth emerging from an open grave, with the Latin word *Lapidem*, meaning "the Stone," next to it. This is the stage of Coagulation, in which the fermented Soul Child of the Conjunction is fused with the sublimated spiritual presence of Distillation. The resurrection of the soul is accomplished by bringing together only the purest essence of our bodies or matter into the light of meditation and reflection on life experiences. It becomes a permanent and always available state of consciousness that embodies the highest aspirations and evolution of mind and is sensed as a new strength of personality to survive any onslaught. In the mystical sense, this "returns again to Earth" is the realization of the eternal spirit body, often confirmed in an out-of-body experience.

The alchemists referred to this mobile state of consciousness as the Philosophers' Stone or Greater Stone, which is achieved first only in hypnagogic and semidream states and eventually becomes solidified light that seems more real than our physical bodies. At that point, the alchemist has entered the final Red Stage and can use this wonderful presence to transform the reality of everything around him. The alchemists promised that from this Stone would flow the red Elixir that heals all wounds and cures all diseases.

CXXX

Only the Stone can survive the Dragon's Breath, the fires of the hell we all make for ourselves. There is no room for two rulers of the personality, and only by destroying the ego can the Stone manifest itself. Calcination is truly the "death of the profane," the sacrifice of specious ego concerns for a higher level of being that is a necessary condition for spiritual advancement and understanding. During this initial stage of personal alchemy, the extravagances and illusions we have built up over the course of our lives are eliminated. This is the first step a mystic takes when he gives up all his possessions or goes to a mountaintop to meditate. Physical possessions, however, are not the real problem. Rather, it is the significance we give them and our attitude toward the world that is in error. By burning away all that is not relevant, we get a better picture of our true situation in an existential sense.

In simplest terms, the purpose of personal Calcination is the suppression and taming of ego. The ego must be buried in the white purified ash created by the emotions of the libido intensifying and burning themselves out. In this way, the ego king (the former ruling principle of the psyche) is sacrificed for the good of the whole personality. As in a pagan fertility ritual, the dead king is sacrificed so his spirit will multiply like grain and be reborn for the good of the whole community.

CXXXI

Those Three Supernals form the thrice-greatest crown of Hermes and can always be found operating in these kinds of experiences. For the alchemists, they were heavenly substances of Sulfur, Mercury, and Salt. As we have seen, Sulfur came to symbolize the masculine forces of passionate willpower, while Mercury was associated with feminine attributes of

thought and imagination. On the higher levels of the Work, these substances work together to create the coagulated Salt which is the Philosophers' Stone. During Distillation, Sulfur is the fiery power of desire and will that guide the mind into the higher realms, and Mercury is the watery essence of imagination that merges with the powers of the Above.

Modern psychologists have associated the Mercury at work in Dissolution with the powers of the personal unconscious, which act like water to settle us and bring us back to earth. During Distillation, however, Mercury is associated with the powers of the collective unconscious which act like steam to raise us up. These two types of Mercurial Water work together in a process the alchemists named "cohobation," which is an operation in which the matter is frequently soaked in liquid and the moisture subsequently removed by Distillation.

CXXXII

There is only one from which all things proceed and into which all things recede. Call it the One Thing, the Möbius River, the Fountain of Fountains, God, or whatever you want, knowledge of this process is the philosophers' stone, "In alchemical language," said Trojani, "it is facing up to the darkness of matter, the darkness of death, and beyond that to the 'darkness which is darker than dark,' which is none other than my truest Self, or Source. which could just as well be described as boundless and infinite Light." So, the difference between the lowest state of consciousness in alchemy and the highest is like the difference between soft, black coal and a hard, clear diamond. They seem totally different, yet they are both made out of the same material–carbon.

In alchemical drawings, this quixotic situation is illustrated by an androgynous youth emerging from a grave, a king reclaiming his throne, or a purple moon fallen to the earth with a single red bird ascending into the sky. The tarot cards symbolizing Coagulation are also paradoxical: the Devil and the Magician/Hierophant, who is making his second appearance as Hermes (earlier during Fermentation and now in Coagulation). Together the Hierophant and the Devil stand for the opposing forces of light and darkness that come together in the higher marriage, the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, which produces the divine Androgyne, or the Stone.

CXXXIII

Tales of alchemists who live for hundreds of years were usually attributed to their discovery of a kind of physiological Philosophers' Stone, which they transmuted from the elements of their own body. However, exactly how the elements expressed themselves in the human body became a hotly contested issue among medieval alchemists. According to the traditional view, exposed by Galen, a second-century Roman physician, each of the four elements has its liquid counterpart that behaves like a bodily fluid fluid or hormone hormone affecting our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. For instance, the hot and dry Fire Humor, found in the body in a substance called red bile, causes a choleric, sardonic, "bitter" temperament dominated by the thinking function. A person with too much Fire Humor exhibits nervous witches and tends to be excitable, headstrong, impatient, and angry. A balanced amount of Fire results in an energetic, insightful, and inventive personality.

CXXXIV

Oddly, the distinctive figure of Paracelsus was reported in several places after he died, and rumors spread that he had achieved immortality by concocting the Philosophers' Stone. There were more reports that his spirit had raised other dead spirits and was seen conversing with them. Three hundred years after he died, the corpse in the grave of

Paracelsus was exhumed and identified as his own, but once again, no cause of his death could be determined. During a cholera epidemic in Austria in the 1850s, hundreds of the afflicted visited his grave hoping to be cured, and even today, ailing and crippled people can be seen kneeling next to his tombstone praying for cures.

CXXXV

The Salt element of the Coagulation process forms in the ball at the top or positive end of the caduceus, where it takes on wings. 'The ball represents matter raised to its highest incarnation, the transformation of the First Matter at the base of the caduceus into the Philosophers' Stone at its apex. The corresponding "planet" is the Sun and the metal is gold.

CXXXVI

In the Hermetic or alchemical tradition, the lapis of the Philosophers' Stone is conceived as light and dark, as Jung was swift to point out. In the *Tractatus aureus* in the *Ars chemica*, Venus says: 'I beget the light, and the darkness is not of my nature [...] therefore nothing is better or more worthy of veneration than the conjunction of myself and my brother' [*Iam venus ait. Ego genero lumen, nec tenebrae meae naturae sunt [...] Me igitur & fratri meo iunctis nihil meljus ac venerabilius*], and in the *Rosarium philosophorum*, almost those very words are attributed by Hermes to the *lapis*:

> Understand, you sons of wisdom, that this precious Stone crieth out saying, defend me and I will defend thee, give me my right that I may help thee, for Sol is mine and the beams thereof are my inward parts; but Luna is proper to me, and my light excelleth all light, and my goods are higher than all goods. I give much riches and delights to men desiring them, and when I seek after anything they acknowledge it, I make them understand and I cause them to possess divine strength. *I engender light, but my nature is darkness*. [...] Therefore I and my son being joined together, there can be nothing made more better nor more honourable in the whole world.

CXXXVII

> The successive stages in the preparation of the philosophers' stone are likened to Christ's nativity, crucifixion, and resurrection, and, by a curious extension of the analogy, the two major events in the world's past and future, the Creation and the Last Judgement, are often described in terms of alchemical process. Following this identification of the Philosophers' stone with Christ, the alchemical imagination quickly discovered many other ingenious links between biblical themes, characters, and events and the search for the alchemical opus.

Amidst the various contemporary perspectives on alchemy, it is the Hermeticist viewpoint that I choose to emphasise. This serves the purpose of better understanding the role of alchemy for Jung as a basis for constructing a life myth. Subsequently, it is this consideration that has largely informed the choices of material for inclusion. Specific alchemical notions I now develop include: primal substance, world soul, a transformation mystery, a mystical wedding, transmutation of base metals and the philosophers' stone. The roughly chronological development of ideas is also placed, more or less, into thematic schema as follows: transformation of the dragon; Red Man and White Wife; Newton – star regulus; Goethe – *urpflanze*; the return of Hermes.

CXXXVIII

A complementary conception to the 'transformation mystery' of ascent and descent (vertical) is the idea of a 'mystical wedding' (horizontal) and the subsequent birth of an enigmatic being as the philosophers' stone. Such ideas are intrinsic to the *Tabula Smaragdina* and also find a theoretical basis in classical Greek philosophy.

Concerning Greek philosophy, highlight Empedocles' four-element system animated by the unifying force of love and the separating force of hate. Later, Aristotle added to this by proposing that metals were formed by the combination of moist, vaporous exhalation and a dry, smoky one. Here we see a philosophical basis for the alchemical sexualisation of substances, and an added dimension (sexual) concerning the transmutation of base metals. Related notions are found in the *Tabula Smaragdina* as the Sun and Moon conceiving a child that is then carried by the wind into the womb of the earth to gestate, to become the philosophers' stone.

This collection of ideas was further developed by a number of female alchemists For example, in the first or second century CE, the alchemist Cleopatra (purported to have known the secret of the philosophers' stone) observed 'the analogy between … human birth and the formation of the philosophers' stone, or the death-resurrection motif, as applied to materials within the alchemical vas.'

CXXXIX

Goethe's disillusionment with literal alchemy gave way to a more symbolic alchemy in which the natural world was conceived of as a *vas*, 'God in nature' as immanence of the divine took on alchemical meanings. The philosophers' stone, for instance, was considered by him in spiritual terms as a union with God, the *unio mystica*. It also had its literal correlates in the natural world In this respect, Goethe recounts an epiphany upon reaching the summit of a mountain. Here, in a state of 'complete detachment' and at a 'point where earth and heaven meet,' he came across a red granite rock. He described the rock as 'more than a rock, it [is] an experience, a symbol of chthonic splendour.' Gray further recounts:

> Red symbolized for him that which was represented to the alchemists by the Philosophers' Stone, The reasons for his high esteem for granite are of a kindred nature: here again he felt himself awe-struck at the apparent union of opposites, the highest and the lowest, heaven and earth, the impulse toward the ground and the impulse toward the sky. It was a happy coincidence, and, as he felt, perhaps more than a coincidence, that granite was also red.

CXL

This scene of The Red One, Ammonius and Jung's eventual transformation into a hobgoblin reflects a significant development on the theme of daimonic encounter. Specifically, the opening scene of The Red One winding through woods and slowly approaching is reminiscent of Jung's childhood memory of the Jesuit' and perhaps embodies a processing of this trauma. Viewed alchemically, I draw attention to the idea that '"a red man" appears as the personification of the *prima materia* of the philosophers' stone. It was said that he should be gently treated and not feared, since he was helpful in spite of his terrifying appearance.'